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LS SESSION TO SEE FIREWORKS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The first Session of the 18th Lok Sabha starting Monday is all set to begin on a stormy note given the reduced strength of the ruling BJP in the Lower House and an emboldened Congress with double the number of MPs it had in the previous two Houses. Above all, the Parliament Session comes in the backdrop of a series of exams paper leaks providing enough ammo to an equally strengthened combined Opposition determined to corner Narendra Modi 3.0 Government.

The Opposition is also set to take up the issue of railway safety with a major accident in West Bengal with casualties a week ago. The Congress and other Opposition members have been demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Rail Minister Ashwani Vaishnav.

As scheduled, the Lok Sabha will see oath-taking by the newly-elected members followed by election of the Lok Sabha Speaker on June 26 and President Droupadi Murmu's address to joint sitting of both the Houses on June 27.

The row over appointment of BJP leader and seven-term member Bhartruhari Mahtab as the Pro-tem Speaker is likely to cast shadow over the session. The move has drawn flak from the opposition, which alleged that the claim of Congress member K Suresh to the post was overlooked by the Government.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju asserted that Mahtab has had seven uninterrupted terms as Lok Sabha member, making him eligible for the post, while Suresh lost



elections in 1998 and 2004 which makes his current term as the fourth straight one in the lower house. Earlier, he was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1999. On Monday, Murmu will administer the oath to Mahtab as the Pro-tem Speaker of the Lok Sabha at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. Mahtab will then reach Parliament House and call the Lok Sabha to order at 11 am. The proceedings will begin with members observing a moment of silence on the occasion of the first sitting of the 18th Lok Sabha. This will be followed by Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh placing on the table of the House the list of the members elected to the Lower House. Mahtab will then call upon Prime

Minister Narendra Modi, the leader of the Lok Sabha, to take oath as member of the House.

The Pro-tem Speaker will then administer oath to the panel of chairpersons appointed by the President to assist him in carrying out the proceedings of the House till the election of the Speaker on June 26. The President has appointed Kodikunnil Suresh (Congress), T R Baalu (DMK), Radha Mohan Singh and Fagga Singh Kulaste (both BJP) and Sudip Bandyopadhyay (TMC) to assist Mahtab in administering the oath/affirmation to the newly elected members of the Lok Sabha.

After the panel of chairpersons, the Pro-tem Speaker will administer the oath/affirmation as Lok Sabha members to the Council of Ministers.

The members from States, in alphabetical order, will take oath or make affirmation over the next two days.

The election to the post of Lok Sabha Speaker will take place on Wednesday and the Prime Minister will introduce his Council of Ministers to the House soon after. The President is scheduled to address the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on June 27. The debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address will begin on June 28. The Prime Minister is expected to respond to the debate on July 2 or 3.

Both the Houses are expected to go into a brief recess and re-assemble on July 22 for the presentation of the Union Budget.

CBI gets cracking in NEET case

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR in connection with alleged irregularities in the conduct of the medical entrance exam — National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test-UG — held on May 5, following a complaint from the Education Ministry. It is taking steps to take over probes/FIRs of other States in the matter. Giving top priority to the case, the CBI has formed special teams that are en route to Godhra and Patna, where cases of question paper leaks have been registered by police. The CBI had already registered three cases to probe alleged irregularities in NEET exams conducted in 2018, 2021 and 2022 by NTA and this is the fourth FIR, registered on June 23, to probe allegations of irregularities in 2024 NEET exam against unidentified persons on a reference from the Union Education Ministry. Police in Bihar's Nawada arrested four persons in connection with alleged attack on CBI team probing UGC-NET leak case, said officials.

Facing flak over alleged discrepancies in competitive exams, the Centre on Saturday shunted out National Testing Agency (NTA) Director General Subodh Singh and handed over the probe into irregularities in medical entrance exam NEET-UG to the CBI to conduct a comprehensive investigation



Economic Offences Unit (EOU) personnel leave with the accused arrested in connection with the alleged irregularities in NEET-UG exams 2024 case, after the latter's medical examination at LNJP hospital, in Patna, on Sunday PTI

into the entire gamut of alleged irregularities, including conspiracy, cheating, impersonation, breach of trust, and destruction of evidence by candidates, institutes, and middlemen, including attempted irregularities.

There were allegations of irregularities, including cheating, impersonation and other malpractices after the results of the NEET-UG 2024 was declared on June 4 — days before schedule. Student protests have been raging across the country since, amplified by the Opposition, and the matter has snowballed into a huge political row. The students have been demanding the exam be

rescheduled for everyone and not the 1,500-odd students who received grace marks. This, however, has not been accepted by the Government and the re-test for 1,563 candidates, who had initially received grace marks, held on Sunday. As many as 813 of the 1,563 candidates who were earlier awarded grace marks in NEET-UG appeared for a retest on Sunday, officials said. The allegations in the FIR state that the NEET(UG) 2024 examination was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on 5th May 2024 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 cities abroad, with over 23 lakh candidates appearing for the examination.

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Kejriwal knocks SC door over stay on bail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday moved the Supreme Court seeking urgent hearing against Delhi High Court stay on his bail order in the excise policy case. Earlier, the Chief Minister was granted bail in the alleged excise policy case in a Delhi court. But the High Court stayed the bail till it gives its order on a plea filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) challenging his bail. Kejriwal, who is currently lodged in Tihar Jail, in his petition said the High Court has stayed the bail order ignoring the established legal process and tradition. In this regard, the basic principles of justice and bail established in the country have also been violated.

"The manner adopted by the HC in staying the bail order is contrary to the said clear dicta of law laid down by this court and would violate the basic fundamental threshold on which the bail jurisprudence is premised in our country," the petition stated.

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Mayawati reinstates nephew as political heir, coordinator

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amid mounting pressure for reinstating Akash Anand and giving him some assignment, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday once again announced her nephew her political successor and also appointed him as the national coordinator of the party. The appointment of Akash Anand is seen as a major development after the worst-ever defeat of the BSP in the recent Lok Sabha elections in which the party once again failed to open its account, the same performance it witnessed in 2014 but with much higher percentage of votes.

The BSP supremo and former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati, took the decision to reinstate Akash Anand during a meeting called to review the party's defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. All the district-level office-bearers, senior party leaders and workers of the state attended the crucial meeting called in Lucknow on Sunday. The meeting mainly focused on why the party could not win even a single seat in the general election in the country. Discussions were also held on how things could improve in the 2027 UP assembly elections. Party leaders and officials from across the country, including BSP coordinators and district presidents in Uttar Pradesh, attended the meeting. Akash



BSP supremo Mayawati with nephew Akash Anand PTI

Anand, who also attended the meeting with his father Anand Kumar and BSP general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra, touched the feet of his aunt Mayawati and sought her blessings before the meeting started. Mishra, who prepared a report on the reasons for the party's defeat, handed it over to Mayawati for further necessary action. Akash Anand was first made the national coordinator to set up Mayawati's organisation and campaign for the elections and after this, on December 10, 2023, the BSP supremo made him her political successor. Akash Anand started active politics and campaigned vigorously in the Lok Sabha elections, but in the midst of the polls, on May 7, 2024, Mayawati removed him

not only from the post of party's national coordinator, but also as her successor. He was also described as politically immature. Earlier on Saturday, Akash Anand was made the party's star campaigner for the by-election to be held in Uttarakhand. Assembly by-elections are going to be held in Punjab and Uttarakhnad. The BSP released a list of its 13 star campaigners for the bypolls in which the name of BSP chief Mayawati is at number one and the name of Akash Anand is at number two. From this, it was guessed that Akash Anand had once again entered active politics. At present, only Mayawati knows how much Akash Anand has matured politically in the last one and a

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Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha reviews the Passing out Parade of Jammu and Kashmir Police's 16th BRTC Batch at the Subsidiary Police Training Centre in Reasi district on Sunday PTI

People aiding ultras to be tried under Enemy Agents Act in JK

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Boosting the morale of the security forces deployed on the counter-terrorism grid, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday directed them to hunt down the terrorists and those harbouring them.

Echoing similar sentiments, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir police RR Swain claimed terrorism in Jammu will be wiped out in the next three months. He said people who are harbouring foreign terrorists will be tried under the Enemy Agents Act which is a much harsher law than the UAPA.

Responding to the question from a media person, DGP said to dismantle the terrorist ecosystem in the Union Territory we are considering invoking the Enemies Agents Act. According to him, the stringent law permits life imprisonment or the death penalty for those found aiding or abetting Pakistani terrorists. The DGP hoped the decisive action

would serve as a deterrent discouraging locals not to support foreign terrorists.

According to the latest assessment reports around 35-40 foreign terrorists are active in the region south of Pir Panjal in the frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch. These terrorists are mostly camping inside safe hideouts in small groups of two to three terrorists and executing terror plots at the behest of their handlers sitting across Pakistan. Official sources revealed during the high-level security review meetings these measures were discussed in the backdrop of increase in terror strikes across the Jammu region.

Following these directions, the security forces have further intensified anti-terrorist operations to neutralise these foreign terrorists. Additional troops have been mobilised on ground zero to beef up security ahead of the Amarnath yatra starting from June 29.

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Two CoBRA personnel martyred in IED blast triggered by Naxals

PTI ■ SUKMA

Two personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force's jungle warfare unit CoBRA were killed after Naxalites blew up a truck with an improvised explosive device (IED) in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Sunday, police said. The Naxal blast took place around 3 pm near Timmapuram village between Silger and Tekalgudem camps of security forces, over 400 km from the State Capital Raipur, a senior police official said.

An advance party of the 201st unit of Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) had launched patrolling from Silger camp under Jagargunda police station limits as a part of its Road Opening Party duty towards Tekalgudem, he said.

The security personnel were on motorcycles while their luggage and rations were being ferried in the ill-fated truck, he said.

"Naxalites triggered an IED blast targeting the truck that claimed the lives of constable Shailendra (29), a resident of Uttar Pradesh, and driver Vishnu R (35) hailing from Kerala. The truck did not have any other occupant," he said. After being alerted about the blast, more forces were rushed to the spot and the bodies were evacuated from the forest, while a search operation continues there, he said. Expressing grief over the incident, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said in a message on X that the martyrdom of jawans will not go in vain. "Received the sad news of the demise of 2 CoBRA soldiers in an IED blast triggered by Naxalites in Sukma district. I pray to God to rest the departed soul in peace and to give strength to their families," he said.



Shah mulls steps to save people from flood fury

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As floods and heavy rains ravage Northeast India, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday called for a series of comprehensive strategies with a 'Zero Casualty Approach' to address the escalating crisis, particularly the recurring flood threats posed by the Brahmaputra River.

Key measures include the creation of at least 50 large ponds to store excess water, leveraging satellite imagery for

enhanced flood management, and upgrading flood forecasting systems. These initiatives are part of a broader effort to mitigate the devastating impacts of floods and improve the region's resilience.

During the review meeting on flood management with officials from the IMD, CWC, NDMA and the National Disaster Response Force, the Minister emphasised the integration of natural drainage

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Man-animal conflict turns tragic in Wayanad

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

It turned out to be a Sunday with a difference in Kerala's Wayanad district as a crowd of more than thousand people staged a "road roko" carrying the carcasses of four cows which were allegedly killed by a tiger during the last four days. Police and Forest Department officials rushed to the spot and disbursed the crowd through peaceful discussion. Owners of the cows were promised by the district authorities an initial solatium of ₹30,000 to the

owners of the cows which were killed by the big tiger. Wayanad, a high range district situated on the periphery of the Western Ghat forests, is no stranger to wild animals. Elephants, tigers, cheetahs, leopards and deers make frequent visits to the human settlements in search of food and water as the reserve forests are short of drinking water and food. The big cats target domestic animals like cows, sheep and bulls while the elephants prefer to have banana plants, jackfruits and mangoes in addition to their favourite



A representational image

delicacy, bamboo plants. The last few months saw a rogue tusker attacking the

owner of a house which turned out to be fatal. Three persons have been killed in

attacks by the wild animals. "We want this tiger to be shot dead so that our children can go to schools. There is no guarantee that the children and bread-earners of the family would return home because of this tiger," said Annie, a housewife who lost one of her cows in the tiger attack.

The Wild Life Department in the district is seriously considering to tranquilise the tiger and shift to another zone. But the last six months saw the death of elephants and big cats which were tranquilised by the

veterinary doctors which have been reported by The Pioneer. All human settlements near the forests in Kerala are a gift from the Governments that ruled the State from time to time and this has led to massive deforestation.

VK Bahuguna, author and former director general of Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, told The Pioneer that this was an unfortunate development. "I cannot blame the tiger or the elephants for this situation," said Bahuguna.

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TSI ‘misbehaves’ with BJP leader, suspended

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A senior traffic sub-inspector was placed under suspension on Sunday after BJP state spokesman Rakesh Tripathi accused him of misbehaving with him and his family during a vehicle checking drive for hooters, black film, and flags in Krishnanagar. The suspension followed a written complaint from Tripathi to senior police officials. The DCP (traffic) confirmed the suspension of Ashutosh Tripathi and stated that the matter was being investigated by an ACP rank officer. He noted that the action was taken after the allegations were found to be prima facie true. In his complaint, Tripathi stated that he had returned from Srinagar with his family on Saturday evening. “Around 6:30 in the evening, near Amausi airport, my car was stopped by

TSI Ashutosh Tripathi for checking,” Tripathi said. He added that he had all the necessary documents for the vehicle and introduced himself as a BJP functionary. “My car was surrounded by four policemen, one of whom started recording a video that included my family members. I opposed this action,” he alleged. Tripathi further claimed that the TSI became angry and warned him against further objections. The TSI allegedly told Tripathi that being a BJP leader did not exempt him from cooperating with the videography process. Tripathi’s car was then moved to the side of the road. He stated that his wife was unwell and requested the TSI to let them go, but the latter did not listen. “The TSI pulled my driver out of the car and asked me to get out as well while misbehaving,”

he alleged. The policemen proceeded to thoroughly check the car, including the bonnet, trunk, and interior. Tripathi claimed that after seeing the pass on the vehicle, the TSI accused it of being fake. When Tripathi protested and mentioned that he would complain to senior officials, the TSI allegedly responded rudely, telling him to leave immediately. Tripathi called the UP DGP to report the TSI’s behaviour and informed senior party leaders about the incident. He also submitted a written complaint to the DCP (traffic). An official statement from the traffic police on Sunday confirmed that the allegations against the TSI were found to be prima facie true. Acting DCP (Traffic) Kamlesh Kumar Dixit stated that the TSI had been suspended and a departmental inquiry ordered.

Taming cybercrime among new CP’s priorities

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The newly-appointed Commissioner of Lucknow Police, Amarendra Kumar Sengar, a 1995-batch IPS officer, said on Sunday that addressing public grievances, taming cybercrime, and unruly traffic in the city would be among his top priorities. He said to stop crime against women, the safety of elderly people would also be among his priorities. “There is a system already working in the Lucknow police. I will review it and prune it further if needed,” he said. The CP said he would ensure regular interaction with the people and public representatives. He announced a review of operational procedures across all police stations. He said he knew that traffic snarls were a big issue in the city, and that they would work in sync with the traffic police for smooth traffic flow in the city. He said strict actions would be taken against a departmental inquiry ordered.



Newly-appointed Commissioner of Lucknow Police Amarendra Kumar Sengar addressing mediapersons on Sunday

gent in cases related to women or children. He said he would ensure the installation of more CCTV

cameras along the city’s borders. The CP added that the police would make relations with the public better.

Sengar, a native of Chhapra in Bihar, has a career spanning 29 years. His academic excellence was recognised with a Junior

Research Fellowship granted by the University Grants Commission during his study. Sengar served as IG (law and order) in Uttar Pradesh and also presided over the Varanasi Zone. Earlier in his career, he was posted as deputy inspector general (DIG) in Gorakhpur, Moradabad, and Basti ranges, overseeing the responsibilities of superintendent of police (SP) or senior superintendent of police (SSP) across nine districts, including Muzaffarnagar, Jhansi, Unnao, Hardoi, Jalaun, and Chitrakoot, for over six years during 1999-2007. His expertise spans various domains within law enforcement, including intelligence and the Crime Branch-Criminal Investigation Department (CB-CID). Sengar’s commitment to international peace and justice led him to work in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as a war crimes investigator, showcasing his dedication to justice beyond national boundaries.

A sub-registrar office no stranger to controversies!

PRABHA SHANKER ■ LUCKNOW

The sub-registrar office of Mohanlalganj is no stranger to controversies. It first courted a row a decade ago when fraudsters sold land belonging to former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shyamacharan Shukla. Even now, police have no clue about the accused, who continue to remain at large. Since then, numerous cases of land registration fraud have emerged, keeping the sub-registrar office at the center of controversy. The increasing incidents of fraud have posed a significant challenge to the Mohanlalganj police. Despite strenuous efforts, they have not been able to track down the fraudster who sold Shukla’s land by impersonating him. Although the police possess photographs of the fraud-

ster, they have yet to make any arrest. Sources indicate that the case has been put on the back burner, with no recent updates on the investigation. The land mafia became active after land prices in the area surged due to the state government’s development projects and the construction of national highways and overbridges. A substantial number of land dispute cases between farmers and builders or realtors are pending in court because the police have been unable to assist the complainants. According to sources, a network of fraudsters and clerks in the registry department is active in the area. These fraudsters use a set of witnesses who vouch for the identity of an impersonator posing as the land seller. The buyer purchases the land at a low price,

PREVIOUS CASES

- On September 29, 2022, Gajraj, a resident of Patwakheda, filed an FIR against some accused for selling his land fraudulently.
- On October 6, 2022, Bhagwandin, a resident of Raibhan Kheda, filed a complaint about the fraudulent sale of his land.
- On October 23, 2022, after her mother’s death, Madhulata reported a case

against a woman impersonating her to sell the land. ■ On December 18, 2022, Nikhil Sharma lodged an FIR against fraudsters for attempting to sell land using a fake death certificate for a living couple. ■ On January 7, 2023, Nepal Singh, a resident of Khargapur, lodged an FIR against fraudsters for selling his land with fake identity cards and documents.

rendering it disputed. Eventually, with police and middlemen’s intervention, the original owner is forced to sell the land at a nominal price. This network also targets land owned by controversial realtors or those who are incarcerated. This new modus operandi is

evident as the state government cracks down on realtors who are rapidly developing colonies and purchasing land from farmers using fraudulent methods. Some, like Shine City scammer Amitabh Srivastava, have been jailed, and the gang is now

attempting to reclaim these lands using various tricks. In 2022 and 2023 alone, about three dozen fraud cases have been registered in Mohanlalganj Kotwali, most involving land property fraud. Shyamacharan, who served as the Madhya Pradesh CM several times, owned land in Meenapur village of Mohanlalganj. On April 2, 2013, six years after his death, a fraudster posing as him executed a sale deed for over 21 bighas (6 biswas) of land. Following a complaint, the district administration and registration department investigated on the CM office’s orders, revealing the fraud. On June 6, 2013, Shyamacharan’s manager filed an FIR against unknown fraudsters at the Mohanlalganj police station. However, the investigation has stalled.

Recently, a group of fraudsters defrauded Amitabh Srivastava, previously involved in the Shine City real estate scandal while he was in Varanasi jail. The accused fraudulently registered his land to a resident of Chinhat at the Mohanlalganj sub-registrar office. The scheme involved using Srivastava’s fake identity while he was imprisoned. The sale deed was purportedly signed during his detention in Varanasi jail. According to records at the registry office, alleged fraudster Srivastava signed the sale deed in favour of Pankaj Mishra on August 24, 2022. The deed falsely claimed Srivastava was identified by witnesses Vipin Yadav from Sarai Karora (Lucknow), and Gyan Prakash Awasthi from Gonda. The signing supposedly occurred in the presence of sub-registrar officials.

Case registered in stunt case after tractor driver dies

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A case was registered at Itaunja police station in connection with a stunt that claimed the life of a tractor driver on Sunday. Earlier, social media was flooded with comments on a viral video showing two tractors tied together at the rear with an iron chain, pulling against each other to demonstrate the vehicles’ strength and the drivers’ skills. Towards the end of the video, one of the tractors overturns, and the driver is trapped underneath. The driver, later identified as Neeraj Maurya of Sitapur, died from the tractor’s weight despite efforts by bystanders to lift it and save him. The other driver was identified as Joginder Yadav of Itaunja.

Sub-inspector of Itaunja police station Raghvendra Pandey said that the accused driver, Joginder Yadav, and other villagers destroyed or deleted evidence from the scene. He described the video as showing two tractor drivers demonstrating the horsepower of their vehicles from different companies and testing their driving skills. The tractors, tied with an iron chain, were pulling against each other when one of the tractors overturns, causing Neeraj to fall and get trapped as the front end of the vehicle lifted and rotated suddenly. In his findings, the SI noted that a large crowd had gathered to witness the “power show” and responded immediately when the tractor overturned, attempting to save Neeraj, but in vain.

Gala time for mango enthusiasts



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The mango orchard visit, organised under the Mango Festival at Vintage Village in Sitapur on Sunday, attracted numerous mango enthusiasts. Supported by the Tourism department and other stakeholders, the event drew groups of friends and families to enjoy freshly plucked mangoes beneath the canopy of trees. Attendees participated in various mango-related activities, savoured a brunch, and immersed themselves in nature’s beauty. The festival proved to be a major draw for tourists from

around the globe, infusing the event and mango orchards with enthusiasm, according to organisers. Divya Gupta, a communications specialist from London, shared her experience, relishing local mangoes amidst the rustic ambience. Jyotsana Habibullah, a key organiser of the Lucknow Mango Festival, highlighted the event’s growth over 12 years. “The festival has not only delighted countless visitors but also positively impacted the lives of 1,200 farmers. Selling 600 tonnes of mangoes directly from farmers to consumers, the festival promotes sustain-

able agriculture, boosts farmers’ incomes, and strengthens rural communities,” she explained. She underscored the festival’s focus on experiential sales to enhance farmers’ value. “In today’s fast-paced digital age, the festival offers a much-needed retreat. Visitors can wander through avenues of mango trees, relax under their shady canopies, and relish freshly plucked mangoes. It’s an opportunity to disconnect from the digital world and reconnect with nature, creating memories filled with joy, laughter, and life’s simple pleasures,” she said.

e-office system soon in Collectorate, Vikas Bhawan and tehsils

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The e-office system will soon be implemented in the Collectorate, Vikas Bhawan, and tehsils. District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar, following the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s instructions, announced on Sunday that all offices of the Collectorate and Revenue department would be connected to the e-office system. Consequently, efforts are underway to implement this system in the Collectorate, Vikas Bhawan, and all the tehsils. The district magistrate explained that the e-office system is a straightforward process. “In this system, every officer and employee will be given personal digital signatures. Camps have been set up by the agency in the Collectorate and Vikas Bhawan for digital signature issuance,” he said. He instructed all employees and officers to fill their forms and submit them promptly. He mentioned that a survey was being conducted to identify the resources required for the e-office sys-

tem. “Within the next two days, a survey of NICNET connectivity will be conducted in all offices. Computers and scanners have been provided at all desks in the Collectorate. If there is a shortage of computers in Vikas Bhawan, tehsil, or any desk of the Collectorate, the officer concerned should inform immediately to obtain the necessary equipment,” he added. The district magistrate provided details on how to work within the e-office system, highlighting the importance of familiarity with Krutidev 10, Unicode, and Mangal type systems. “It is essential for all employees to be proficient in typing in both systems,” he noted. Additionally, he instructed the NIC to prepare a one-month intensive computer training course for employees who may lack computer skills. The district magistrate stated that logins would be available to all employees by Tuesday, followed by training on how to use the e-office system. He emphasised that the e-office system is simple, easy, and transparent.

AAP student wing protests NEET ‘scam’

Lucknow (PNS): Leaders and activists of the student wing of Aam Aadmi Party took out the ‘funeral’ of the education ministry and National Testing Agency (NTA) in the city in protest against the paper leak case. AAP leader and state president of Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Samiti (CYSS) Vanshraj Dubey alleged the Bharatiya Janata Party had ruined the future of students and youth by leaking crores of papers. He said AAP student wing CYSS would stage protests across the state on the issue of paper leak. He said the issue of paper leak was making headlines in the country these days. On Sunday, the CYSS activists staged a protest against the education ministry and the exam conducting agency NTA under the leadership of Vanshraj Dubey and took out a ‘funeral procession’ of the education ministry. The CYSS activists were marching from the AAP state office in Gomti Nagar to the chief minister’s residence when the police stopped them. This led to an altercation and clash between the CYSS activists and the police. Vanshraj Dubey said that the paper leaks had happened wherever there was a BJP government in the country.

Opportunity for underprivileged to become flat owners shortly

Lucknow (PNS): The underprivileged will have the opportunity to own a flat in an apartment complex that has been

the pioneer

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

It is informed that Aastha Dubey and Shreya Dubey are the names of the same person i.e., me but I want to keep my name Aastha Dubey only. So in future I should be known only by the name Aastha Dubey. Aastha Dubey D/o Shri Awadesh Kumar Dubey R/o H. No. 83A/100, Juh Khurd, Juh Colony, Kanpur Nagar.

constructed in the Devpur locality of Para area, scheduled to be completed by the end of September this year at a cost of Rs 7 lakh per accommodation. The registration process for these flats will commence from August 15 this year. The basement and ground floor of the complex will be designated for parking and other purposes. This was disclosed by Vice-Chairman of Lucknow Development Authority Indramani Tripathi on Sunday. Tripathi mentioned that the registration period would last for one month, and possession of the flats would be handed over to eligible homebuyers by the end of September. He emphasised that residents allotted flats

would have the opportunity to inspect them for satisfaction. If there are any concerns regarding building materials or construction, they should lodge complaints with the chief engineer to address any anomalies, he added. The apartment complex comprises three housing towers with a total of 500 flats, which were completed and made ready for sale by the end of March this year. Tripathi explained that the registration process was originally scheduled to begin in April but was postponed due to the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct for the Lok Sabha elections. Despite a letter written to the Election Commission in April requesting permission

to proceed with registration, there has been no response from the authorities concerned, he pointed out. Tripathi added that those utilising parking or other facilities in the basement or ground floor would be required to pay monthly rent, the specific amount of which is yet to be finalised by the accounts department. Since March this year, technical staff and other LDA personnel have been engaged in maintaining the housing towers to preserve their appearance, Tripathi further noted. To ensure transparency and prevent misinformation by middlemen or unscrupulous individuals, Tripathi stated that property registrations would be conducted online.



The ‘Udaan Lata Mangeshkar Samman 2024’ awards were given at Urdu Academy in Gomti Nagar on Sunday. Pawan Singh Chauhan and Vidya Bindu Singh honoured personalities from various fields, including Ustad Yugantar Sindoor, Pandit Raj Khushi Ram, Manoj Mishra, Prabha Srivastava, Surabhi Singh and Vikram Bisht.

पावरग्रिड
POWERGRID

NOTICE

1. The Petitioner above-named has filed a petition before the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, New Delhi for determination of Tariff from DOCO to 31-03-2024 for Asset-1: 500 MVAR Thyristor Controlled Reactor (TCR) at Kurukshetra under ‘Implementation of 500 MVAR Thyristor Controlled Reactor at Kurukshetra 400kV bus’.

2. The beneficiaries of the Transmission system are: (a) Ajmer Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (b) Jaipur Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (c) Jodhpur Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (d) Punjab State Electricity Corporation limited (e) Haryana Power Purchase Centre (f) Jammu & Kashmir Power Corporation Ltd. (g) Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd. (h) BSES Yamuna Power Ltd. (i) BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd. (j) Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd. (k) Chandigarh Electricity department (l) Uttaranchal Power Corporation Ltd. (m) North Central Railway (n) New Delhi Municipal council. (o) Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board.

3. Capacity of the generating station/ line length, number of bays of the transmission system: 500MVAR TCR (400/33kV, 4” 167MVA/ICT)

4. Approved capital cost of the project (Rs. in lakh) – FR: Rs.26733.12 Lakhs, RCE: N.A. Authority which has approved the Capital Cost: Board of Directors of Petitioner

5. Scheduled date of commercial operation- 02.07.2021, Actual date of commercial operation: 16.12.2023.

6. Capital cost on the date of commercial operation (Rs. in lakh): Rs. 12635.21 Lakhs

7. Details of tariff:

Name of the asset	2023-24	(Rs. in lakhs)
ASSET-1	692.93 (Pro-rata)	

8. A copy of the petition made for determination of tariff is posted on the website www.powergrid.in

9. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the petition may be filed by any person, including the beneficiary through the e-filing portal of the Commission, with a copy to the Petitioner within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place: Gurugram
Date: 17.06.2024

Mohd. Mohsin
Chief General Manager (Commercial)

POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED
(A Government of India Enterprise)
Registered Office: B-9, Qutab Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi 110 016
Corporate Office: Saudamini, Plot No.2, Sector-29, Gurugram, Haryana - 122 001
A MAHARATNA PSU

Council school teachers to digitally record attendance

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As part of ongoing effort to make the council schools of Uttar Pradesh digitally active, the Yogi Adityanath government has issued instructions to digitise all 12 types of registers in the schools across the state, along with providing facility for digital marking of attendance for both teachers and students. Under this, both students and teachers will be required to mark their attendance using a face recognition system on tablets. This process will be implemented across the state starting July 15. It is noteworthy that the Yogi government has been emphasising the digitisation of all types of work in council schools for quite some time. As part of this effort, a digital module has been prepared on the Prerna Portal to digitise all 12 types of registers in these schools. Additionally, tablets and SIM cards have been provided to schools for digital attendance.

Director General, School Education, Kanchan Verma has instructed all district basic

education officers to fill all registers of council schools digitally. Attendance, admissions, classroom-wise student attendance, mid-day meals, distribution of integrated free materials, stock, income-expenditure and cheque issues, meetings, inspections, correspondence, child census, and library and sports registers have been digitised, new module named Digital Registers has been developed on the Prerna Portal for simplified registration and technology-based digital usage. The digital format of the registers has been prepared following the physical registers currently being used. Accordingly, all entries will now be recorded on the digital platform. The teacher attendance register is included among the 12 digital registers. Consequently, all working teachers and staff in the school will have to digitally record their attendance daily from arrival to departure. According to the directives, all teachers will mark their attendance from 7:45 am to 8:00 am upon arrival and from 2:15

pm to 2:30 pm upon departure, from April 1 to September 30. From October 1 to March 31, attendance will be marked from 8:45 am to 9:00 am upon arrival and from 3:15 pm to 3:30 pm upon departure. Currently, until further notice, teachers will mark their attendance from 7:15 am to 7:30 Am upon arrival and from 1:30 pm to 1:45 pm upon departure. Attendance will not be valid after the stipulated time. The department has provided 2,09,863 tablets for the use of teachers in council primary/composite schools. The process of providing tablets for teachers in council higher primary schools is underway. In these schools, all teachers and staff will mark their attendance daily on the Prerna Portal using their mobile numbers/smartphones. Subsequently, attendance will be verified by the headmaster. Tablets and smartphones will be identified through geofencing, and it will be mandatory for teachers and headmasters to be present on the school premises when marking atten-

dance on the portal. Similarly, the daily attendance of all the students will be recorded on the class-wise student attendance register. For students, attendance will be marked from 8:00 am to 9:00 am from April 1 to September 30, and from 9:00 am to 10:00 am from October 1 to March 31. Currently, attendance will be marked from 7:30 am to 8:30 am until further notice. Additionally, during enrollment, their complete details can be entered into the digital registration register. This includes the student's name, gender, date of birth, parent details, Aadhaar number, etc. Upon enrollment, the system will provide a unique identification number, which will be recorded in the digital register by the headmaster. Furthermore, the student's details will be filled out or updated through the Prerna Portal/Prerna DBT App. The details of passing the last class and issuing the transfer certificate for other schools will also be recorded in the digital registration details register.

Aided schools to be equipped with modern education system

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government, committed to enhancing the quality of education in Uttar Pradesh through modernisation, has initiated the rejuvenation of the state's aided schools. Following the detailed action plan prepared as per the wishes of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the process has begun to connect these schools to an online platform. Soon, a mobile app will be developed, integrating Aadhaar and other vital information of students and staff. Giving this information here on Sunday afternoon, an official spokesman claimed that this app will be equipped with many features, including geo tagging and a teaching staff module. The Social Welfare department has entrusted the responsibility of its development to Uttar Pradesh Electronics

Corporation Limited (UPLC). Taking the process forward, the UPLC has started the process of selection and allocation of work to the empanelled companies and has sought applications through e-tender. Aligning with Chief Minister Yogi's vision of development, preparations are being made to develop the app completing various processes. In this sequence, the app development service provider agency selected by the UPLC after allocation will first have to prepare a detailed project study based on the feedback received from the department officials. Next, important data from aided schools, including information about students, staff, Aadhaar, and other crucial information will be collected. This data will be compiled and adjusted according to the system requirements specification (SRS). The project report and detailed report will be created based on this,

paving the way for the app's development. Based on the system requirements specification, the detailed project report (DPR) will guide the development of the app and online modules, including the registration module and the management information system (MIS). The registration module will be divided into three categories: student registration, staff registration, and school (infrastructure) registration. These modules will be developed on the basis of easy accessibility. This online module-based mobile app is being developed to manage a vast database, allowing the tracking and accessing of information for over 60,000 students from a single platform. The app will include the student's date of birth, gender, mobile number, address, family background, social and financial details, Aadhaar validation, and acad-

emic records. Similar information will be recorded for staff and teachers as well. Additionally, the app will store details about schools, including name, complete address, management details, and latitude-longitude coordinates. The app will be equipped with advanced security features like login and access of more than 400 aided schools, directorate login (admin), ID password management enabled, user role defining and permission access, listing, user friendly accessibility, analytics and scalability capability. The implementing agency will also ensure that 16 GB RAM based hosting service, one terabyte storage and search engine optimised app will be developed. Additionally, annual maintenance and a three-day official training for staff will be provided, following recommendations from the computer emergency response team (CERT).

UGC NET PAPER LEAK

CBI interrogates Kushinagar resident on suspicion of involvement

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A six-member team of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is investigating the irregularities in the National Eligibility Test (UGC NET), raided a house in Kushinagar on Friday night in search of a suspect. The team detained a student, Nikhil Soni of Padrauna, Sidhua Bazaar, and questioned him for seven hours. The CBI suspects that Nikhil is associ-

ated with the gang that leaked the NET paper. The team's investigation is going on. Nikhil used to prepare for competitive exams by staying in Kota, Rajasthan three years ago. After this he came to Lucknow and is now preparing for competitive exams by staying there. He was at home for the last one month. The CBI Delhi team reached Nikhil's house in Kushinagar at around 11 pm on Friday and took him into custody. After questioning

him for some time at home, the team brought him to the police station. The CBI officials questioned him from 10 am to 5 pm on Saturday. The team asked Nikhil several questions related to the paper leak. He could not answer some of them. The CBI officials refused to tell anything regarding the interrogation. Nikhil's father runs a shop in Sidhua Bazaar. On June 18, after the completion of the first shift of NET exam, Nikhil wrote in a group asking

if anyone had the paper. After this, someone shared the paper in the group. After editing it, he posted it on Telegram saying that the UGC NET paper has been leaked. If you want the second shift paper, send money. Immediately he received ₹50,000 for the second shift paper. According to sources, there is no evidence of him having the paper. Actually, the paper had already been leaked, so he cheated aspirants to extort money, sources confirmed.

Regular practice of yoga improves lives of filariasis patients in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government is running various campaigns across Uttar Pradesh to achieve the ambitious goal of eradicating filariasis from the state by 2027. Remarkably, the government has made significant strides in combating filariasis through yoga while the lives of filariasis patients have significantly improved through regular yoga and exercise. Under the instructions of CM Yogi Adityanath and the guidance of the Health department, supporting organisations are working to reintegrate filariasis patients, who have long been isolated from society, back into the mainstream. As part of this initiative, an Institute of Applied Dermatology (IAD) centre has been established at the Regional Ayurveda Research Institute in Indiranagar, Lucknow. Here, filariasis patients are taught

care methods, yoga and pranayama. Many members of the Filaria Network and Patient Support Group have improved their quality of life by learning proper care techniques. Explaining the relationship between yoga, exercise, and managing swelling in filariasis-affected limbs, Sandeep Kumar, a yoga consultant at the Institute of Applied Dermatology, stated that the treatment protocol includes subtle exercises, yoga postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayam), hand gestures (mudra), and relaxation poses (shavasana). Patients practice regular yoga and exercise for 14 days alongside getting treatment, which improves their wellbeing. Vibhuraaj Kumar, executive coordinator at the Institute of Applied Dermatology, highlighted that filariasis affects the lymphatic system, causing fluid buildup and swelling in the limbs. In such cases, yoga and exercise help reduce swelling and

assist the lymphatic system in functioning properly. It is important to note that this infection, which spreads due to the bite of Culex mosquito, can take five to fifteen years to appear as filariasis. There is no effective cure, so prevention is crucial. Filariasis elimination focuses on two main points: the Mass Drug Administration (MDA/IDA) programme and Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention (MMDP). Under MMDP, the Health department, with the help of partner organisations, trains filariasis patients on how to properly wash and clean affected areas, reduce swelling, and prevent disease progression through yoga and exercise. This training has helped reduce swelling in affected areas and has given patients confidence that with a little effort, they can avoid risks, perform daily tasks independently, and lead active lives. Ganga Prasad, a 55-year-old resident of Chhatha Meel on

Sitapur Road, Lucknow, shared that both his legs have been affected by filariasis for the past 10-12 years. "Due to this, I had to close my shop and my children's education was disrupted. Despite extensive treatment, I found no relief. However, after joining the network, I learned to exercise at least twice a day, wash and clean the affected areas, and received treatment at the IAD centre. Now, I feel much lighter in my legs and entire body and more comfortable," he said. Similarly, Sudha Devi, a 34-year-old network member from Kanpur, mentioned that daily exercise has almost eliminated the swelling in her legs. Eleven months ago, during training by a community health officer, she started practising yoga and exercise and has continued daily since then. She also takes care of cleaning her legs. The biggest benefit is that she can now easily wear the anklet she couldn't wear last year and can manage household chores with ease.

Dr Mookerjee made ultimate sacrifice for united India: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday that on June 23, 1953, Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of a united India, advocating for one nation, one leader, and one law. Paying floral tribute to Dr Mookerjee, the founder president of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, on his death anniversary in the Civil Hospital premises, Hazratganj, the chief minister said: "Following the country's Independence in 1947 and the implementation of the Constitution in 1950, the Congress-led government attempted to undermine national integrity by introducing Article 370. In response, Dr Mookerjee, who was then serving as the minister of food processing industries, resigned and launched a massive movement to abolish Article 370 in Kashmir for the prestige of the country."

CM Yogi noted that Dr Mookerjee, along with thousands of workers from the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, launched a campaign for the Kashmir Satyagraha and sacrificed his life. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the NDA government has honoured the sentiments of one nation, one leader, and one law by abrogating Article 370 in Kashmir," he said.



"This is a true tribute to those who sacrificed their lives for Kashmir, the country's integrity, and border security," he added. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, former Deputy CM and Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Sharma, Cabinet minister Swatantra Dev Singh, Mayor

Sushma Kharakwal, MLA Yogesh Shukla, MLC Dr Mahendra Singh, Ramchandra Pradhan, Lalji Nirmal, Avnish Singh, Mukesh Sharma, and others were present on the occasion. Paying tribute to Dr Mookerjee on his official 'X' account, the CM wrote, "A humble tribute to

the great patriot, founder president of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, esteemed academician, and guide to nationalists, Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, on his death anniversary! His entire life and sacrifice, dedicated to the unity and integrity of India, serve as a great inspiration to all countrymen."

Yogi government sets target to plant 35 crore saplings

To expand UP's green cover

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With collective support and effort, the Yogi Adityanath government plans to plant 350 million saplings this year to expand Uttar Pradesh's green areas. The goal is to increase the state's green cover from 9 per cent to 15 per cent by 2026-27 with public cooperation. Additionally, specific targets have been set for all departments and divisions in the state-wide campaign. The Yogi government has also directed proper preparations to ensure the availability of high quality saplings for all stakeholders. As in the previous year,

this year preparations have begun for a safe plantation and the achievement of the target. The goal is to plant 350 million saplings, with specific targets assigned to various departments: 140 million for Forest, Environment, and Climate Change, 125.9 million for Rural Development, 25 million for Agriculture, 15.5 million for Horticulture, 12.8 million for Panchayati Raj, 10.6 million for Revenue, 3.5 million for Urban Development, 1.8 million for Higher Education, 1.4 million for Silk, 1.3 million each for Public Works, Railways and Water Power, 1.2 million for Basic Education, 1.1 million for Health, 900,000 for Industry, 800,000 each for Industrial Development and Secondary Education, 700,000 each for Home and Animal Husbandry, 600,000 each for Energy and

Cooperation, 500,000 each for Housing Development, Defence and Technical Education, and 300,000 each for Labour and Transport. Under the campaign, saplings will be planted in all 18 divisions. Targets for all have been fixed. Lucknow division has been given the target of planting the maximum number of saplings. Four crore saplings will be planted in the Lucknow division. 3.13 crore in Kanpur division, 2.76 crore in Chitrakoot division, 2.58 crore in Jhansi division, 2.27 crore in Mirzapur, 2.20 crore in Aayodhya, 1.95 crore in Devipatan, 1.89 crore in Prayagraj, 1.87 crore in Bareilly, 1.78 crore in Varanasi, 1.76 crore in Moradabad, 1.74 crore in Agra, 1.43 crore in Gorakhpur, 1.34 crore in Azamgarh, 1.20 crore in

Aligarh, 1.14 crore in Meerut division, 1.08 crore in Basti and 88 lakh in Saharanpur division. There will also be geo-tagging of plantation sites. The Forest department will plant 12.60 crore saplings in the divisions, and other departments will plant around 22.40 crore saplings. The Yogi government has directed officials to plant trees statewide to turn Uttar Pradesh green. Trees will be planted on forest land, village panchayat and community land, around expressways and canals, on land owned by development authorities and industrial complexes, on Defence and Railway land, on medical and educational institution grounds, on other government properties, on private farmland with farmers' cooperation, and by citizens on their private premises.

Govt plans to increase power generation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government is gearing up to meet the rapidly rising demand of electricity in the state. By end of this fiscal 2024-25, investment of over Rs 10 lakh crore will materialise, thus making the state self-reliant in electricity generation. The government plans to increase power generation by approximately 5,255 MW through 10 new thermal power plants over the next three years. Additionally, by 2030, the expansion of three existing units in the state will add 5,120 MW of additional power generation capacity. The 10 new thermal power stations which are expected to be commissioned in the state include 660 MW Obra C Unit-2 by September this year, 660 MW Jawaharpur Unit-2 by July this year, 561 MW Ghatampur Unit-1 by July 2024, 660 MW Panki Unit by July 2024, 561 MW Ghatampur Unit-2 by December 2024, 561 MW Ghatampur Unit-3 by March 2025, 396 MW Khurja STPP Unit-1 and 396 MW Unit-2 by May 2025, 400 MW Singrauli Stage-3 Unit-1 by August 2027 and 400 MW Singrauli Stage-3 Unit-2 by August 2027. With the commissioning of all these power stations, an additional 5255 MW of electricity will be produced in the state. The Yogi Adityanath government aims to boost the state's power generation capacity by 5120 MW by 2030.

Keen contest expected in UP assembly bypolls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A keen contest is likely in the by-elections to 10 assembly seats which have fallen vacant following election of the sitting MLAs to Lok Sabha. The INDIA bloc, comprising Samajwadi Party and Congress in Uttar Pradesh, made significant gains at the cost of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party by winning 43 Lok Sabha seats in the state. This has put the ruling BJP under tremendous pressure to retain and also regain the lost ground. The bypolls schedule is yet to be announced by the Election Commission of India. However, the SP and Congress have announced that they will contest the assembly bypolls together under the INDIA bloc. The ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance has also begun its preparations. The assembly seats fell vacant after nine MLAs, including SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, were elected to the Lok Sabha while SP MLA from Sisamau Irfan Solanki of Kanpur was disqualified after he was sentenced to jail in a criminal case. UP Assembly's Special Secretary Brajbhushan Dubey said that information about the vacancy on 10 seats had been sent to the ECI. "As per the procedure, by-elections can be held on these seats within six months," he said. Five of these assembly seats were won by the SP in 2022 while one seat was bagged by the Rashtriya Lok Dal which was then in alliance with the SP. Three seats were won by the BJP and one seat by BJP ally NISHAD Party. While the by-

election results will be numerically inconsequential for the BJP in the state assembly where it has a comfortable majority, they will impact the morale of both sides as any further losses to the BJP will help the opposition SP and Congress to further cement their gains. While the SP and the Congress have expressed confidence that they will continue their winning streak, the BJP is also preparing to do "something special" in the by-elections to increase its "credibility," according to leaders. BJP spokesman Manish Dixit said, "The NDA will contest the assembly by-elections with full strength. There is no pressure anywhere, rather the NDA will fight the assembly by-elections with full strength. BJP workers are always ready for public service and elections." "The party will fight the elections with all its might and the results will be a special achievement," he added. On the question of giving seats to alliance partners, Dixit said, "The party leadership will decide this but at the level of organisation and government, we have started preparing for the elections with full enthusiasm." SP spokesperson and national secretary Rajendra Chaudhary said, "Preparations for by-elections have been started on all the vacant seats and in alliance with the Congress party, we will fight the elections with full strength and win." He added, "The committee formed for management of the Lok Sabha elections is preparing for these 10 seats and party national president Akhilesh

Yadav will form a new committee for this after the Parliament session." In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the INDIA bloc won 43 seats out of 80 in the state, with 37 seats going to the SP and six to the Congress. On the other hand, the ruling BJP won 33 seats while its ally Rashtriya Lok Dal won two and Apna Dal (Sonelal) bagged one seat. The Bahujan Samaj Party could not open its account in this election. The BJP and its allies had won 73 Lok Sabha seats in UP in 2014 and 64 seats in 2019. In the 2022 UP assembly elections, the BJP won a total of 273 seats with its allies. Presently, in the 403-member Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly, the BJP has 249 MLAs, its ally Apna Dal (S) has 13, RD has eight, Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party has six and Nirbal Indian Shoshit Hamara Aam Dal (NISHAD) has five members. The main opposition SP has 103 members and Congress has two. Apart from this, there are two members of the Jansatta Dal (Loktantrik) and one of the BSP. In the by-elections to four assembly constituencies held along with the Lok Sabha elections, two seats each were won by the SP and the BJP, but these MLAs have not yet taken oath. The MLAs from the NDA who were elected to Lok Sabha are BJP's Chandan Chauhan, RJD's Atul Garg, Aanoop Valmiki and Praveen Patel, and NISHAD Party's Vinod Kumar Bin. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav along with party MLAs Ziaur Rahman, Lalji Verma and Awadhesh Prasad have also been elected to the Lok Sabha.

MoU signed to provide better facilities to cancer patients

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Cancer Centre (MPMMCC), Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital (HBCH) and Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) on Saturday to provide better facilities to cancer patients. Under this NCL will provide financial assistance to the hospital for purchasing the medical equipment to strengthen the existing facilities and the fund will also be used to buy few new equipment. The MPMMCC and HBCH (Units of Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai) have registered more than one lakh cancer patients since it was inaugurated in 2019 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In view of the increasing number of patients, continuous efforts are being made by the hospital to increase the facilities in the institute. In this regard an MoU was signed between MPMMCC/HBCH



and NCL under which NCL will provide Rs 14.49 crore to the hospital as a part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity. The fund will be utilised to purchase a few equipment for the laboratory, radiology, transfusion medicine and CSSD departments. On the occasion Director of MPMMCC & HBCH Dr Satyajit Pradhan said "we are thankful to the NCL for standing with us in the fight against cancer. This agreement will strengthen the relationship between Tata

Memorial Centre, Varanasi, and NCL and this will also give impetus to the service of humanity. The funds received under CSR will not only increase the facilities for cancer patients visiting the hospital but will also strengthen the current services". He said, our aim is to provide state-of-the-art cancer care to cancer patients of Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring states so that patients do not have to wander to other cities and states for treatment. The MoU was signed in the presence

of Additional Secretary, Ministry of Coal, Rupindra Brar, Joint Director Satinder Kumar, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of NCL B Sairam, Director (Personal) Manish Kumar, head (CSR) Rakesh Kumar Singh Gautam, Chief Development Officer (CDO) of Varanasi Himanshu Nagpal, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Cancer Hospital Bireesh Chaubey and Public Relations Officer (PRO) Akhilesh Pandey.

KVC records remarkable increase in income

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

With the expansion of facilities at Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham, popularly known as Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (KVC) in the recent years, there has been a record increase in donations and the number of pilgrims visiting the corridor as its income has increased fourfold from the financial year 2017-18 to 2023-24. During the Corona period, there was a slight decrease in the number of devotees, but an unprecedented increase was recorded after that. The expansion and modernisation of this corridor have made it more accessible, attracting a growing number of devotees worldwide day by day.

After the inauguration of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham on December 13 in 2021 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the income also saw significant growth. After the transformation of the corridor, numerous facilities have been added under the continuous inspection and guidance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The expansion of the temple



and the ease of darshan have further boosted tourism in this holy ancient city. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of

Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust Vishwa Bhushan Mishra said that the income of the corridor from

offerings, donations, tickets, and revenue from newly constructed buildings on the premises has increased fourfold in the last seven years. Since the inauguration of corridor, the number of devotees visiting the temple reached 16.22 crore by May last. Kashi has been a pilgrimage site for followers of Sanatan Dharma since time immemorial and now the city offers world-class facilities. It has become easier to reach this city from every corner of the globe, increasing the influx of devotees.

According to the CEO, the income of Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) before inauguration of corridor was about ₹20.14 crore in 2017-18 which increased around ₹26 crore in next two financial years but sharply declined to ₹10.82 crore during COVID pandemic period in 2020-21 due to several restrictions but as soon as the restrictions were lifted it increased to ₹20.72 crore in 2021-22. However, after the inauguration of corridor, it saw a remarkable jump to ₹58.51 crore and ₹86.79 crore in the last two financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively.

Over 1.71 cr saplings to be planted in Varanasi division

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the plantation campaign to be launched during the rainy season from July as per the target of the state government more than 1.71 crore saplings will be planted in Varanasi division to make it more green as in the absence of sufficient trees, the residents had to face great inconvenience due to 46-47 degrees Celsius temperature during the summer. Like the previous years, this time also the state government has also planned to run a massive plantation campaign. According to Conservator of Forests (Varanasi) Dr Ravi Kumar Singh, preparations are going on to plant more than 1.71 crore saplings in Varanasi division, including 60.08 lakh in Chandauli district, 51.97 lakh in Jaunpur, 40.14 lakh in Ghazipur and about 16.97 lakh saplings in Varanasi. The officers from 27



government departments will join the campaign in this plantation drive. He said the drive will help in increasing the net amount of oxygen in the atmosphere and preserving the environment. "There is a plan to plant more fruit-bearing and oxygen-giving plants like drumstick, peepal, pakkad, banyan, arjun, jamun, amla, guava, mango, teak, sheesham etc during the plantation campaign to be started next month", he said.

70-year-old woman's murder worked out

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

With the arrest of an accused, the police on Sunday claimed to have worked out the murder of an elderly woman. The victim was found dead in her house in Anandpuram Colony under the Dhoomanganj police station here on Thursday.

Kusumlata, a retired officer from the Board of Secondary Education, was murdered by a person living in front of her house who has been nabbed by the police. The youth who killed the woman by hitting her on her head was identified as Keshav Prasad and is being questioned. On Sunday, the police solved the mystery of this murder. Dhoomanganj Inspector Vaibhav Singh said the mystery of this murder was revealed by CCTV footage. The masked man was seen in the CCTV footage from the house to the road. The miscre-

ant was seen entering and leaving Kusumlata's house. One of his accomplices was standing outside. Along with Kusumlata, the attackers had also conspired to kill her son Saurabh Srivastava alias Pintu. As Pintu was not in the house at that time, so he survived. The police was engaged in investigation on the basis of his height and body structure. While questioning the neighbours, one thing came out that the woman's son had a grudge against a family living in front of the house over a girl. On this basis, the police identified the masked man, caught hold of him and when questioned strictly he confessed his crime. The footage made it clear that around 11.30 am on June 20, a young man wearing a white shirt and black pants with a towel wrapped around his face entered Kusumlata's house. After staying inside for about five minutes, he came out

again. After a while he opened the door of the house, went inside again and stayed there for about 50 minutes. On Thursday Kusumlata Srivastava (70) was found dead in her house in Kasari Masari area under Dhoomanganj police station. She was bleeding from her head and was murdered by hitting with a rod. When the maid came to prepare dinner at 7 pm, she started screaming on finding the woman dead. The household items were also scattered. Kusumlata lived with her son Saurabh Srivastava in Anandapuram Colony. Her husband Satish Srivastava had died. Elder son Prashant lives outside the city. Saurabh who lives with her works in a company and comes home at night. When the maid came in the evening, she found Kusumlata's body in the room.

CASE REGISTERED: A case of cheating a competitive student in the name of getting him

a job in Food Corporation of India (FCI) has come to light. The victim has lodged a report at the Colonelganj police station here on Sunday. According to a report, Munna Rakesh lives on rent in Salori and is preparing for competitive exams. He told the police that he met a student Raman Yadav at a tea shop and became friends. It is alleged that one day he met Vinod Pandey of Ayodhya, at Raman's room. He told him that he could get him a job in FCI. He gave him ₹1.5 lakh for the job. He also deposited ₹1.5 lakh for the job of his relative Kuldeep. A few months passed but he did not get a job. Finally, he went to ask for money from him but he started getting threats from them. When his plea was not heard, he appealed to DCP Nagar Deepak Bhukar for help. On the orders of DCP, the police registered a case at Colonelganj police station and started investigating

the matter. **GIRL DIES:** A five-year-old minor girl was killed when the two mobikes collided head-on in Kosda Kala village under Manda police station area here. The girl was seriously injured in the accident. She was immediately taken to the hospital for treatment where the doctors declared her dead. The family members are inconsolable due to the death of the girl. Lalmani of Basia Tara village, told the police in a written complaint that he was returning home with his brother Ram Narayan and his five-year-old granddaughter Anjali on a bike. As he reached near Kosda Kala village, another speeding mobike coming from the opposite direction collided with his bike. As a result of which the girl was injured. On receiving the information, the police sent her to the hospital where after treatment, she was referred to the district hospital in a critical

condition. She died in the hospital. The police is investigating the case by registering a case against the other bike rider. Manda Inspector Shailendra Singh said that a case has been registered on the complaint of the victim. Further action is underway. **CAMPAIGN:** A special communicable disease control campaign is going to start from July 1 while Dastak Abhiyan will be kicked off from July 11 here. Regarding the preparations, a review meeting of the Inter-Departmental Coordination Committee was held in the auditorium of Vikas Bhawan on Saturday under the chairmanship of District Development Officer (DDO) Bholanath Kanaujia. In it DDO explained the responsibilities assigned to the officials of the Medical and Health Department, District Panchayati Raj Department, Urban Development department etc.

Preparations underway for Mahakumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In view of the world largest gathering Mahakumbh to be held in Sangam in January next year, efforts are being made to give the hotels, restaurants and dhabas on the main routes of the city a new look. For this, instructions have also been given to the officials concerned from the government level.

Preparations are underway for the Mahakumbh to be held here in January. The city is being completely brightened up so that crores of devotees coming from the globe country and the world may be overwhelmed by seeing the aura here. Regional Tourism Officer Aparajita Singh said as devotees from all over the world are going to come to this city during the Mahakumbh this initiative is being taken so that they have a good experience here. Efforts are being made give the dhabas and restaurants on many other routes from Prayagraj to Lucknow, Kanpur, Rewa, Chitrakoot, Mirzapur, Varanasi a new look. In view of Mahakumbh-2025, the government is preparing to build a grand guest house in Prayagraj. VVIP and very special guests will be arriving in Prayagraj during the Mahakumbh. For this, a guest house equipped with all the facilities is to be built here. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed to start its work soon. For this, a place has also been marked on Maharishi Dayanand Marg of the city. It is to be built in an area of 10,300 square meters. Arrangements for conference hall, canteen etc. will be made here.

Meanwhile Additional Municipal Commissioner Dipendra Yadav will be investigating the alleged scam in the Electricity department now. Municipal Commissioner Chandra Mohan Garg has ordered an investigation on the instructions of Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant.

Implementation process of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana starts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The implementation process of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) has been started by the Child Development Department. For the implementation of the scheme, the Director, Child Development Services and Nutrition, Uttar Pradesh, has issued detailed guidelines. In this direction, the training to District Programme Officers (DPOs) has already been provided for the implementation of the programme. After receiving training, all ICDS supervisors will be given orientation by DPO DK Singh under the guidance of Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal and they have been instructed to survey the beneficiaries. Presently, the login IDs of DPO and child development project officer have been created on the web-



Orientation programme for ICDS supervisors under PMMVY being held in Varanasi on Saturday.

site of PMMVY and the work of creating IDs of supervisors is being done. After the creation of the IDs of the supervisors, the process of forwarding and payment of the applications made earlier will be done in the first phase.

At present, verification of about 4,000 beneficiaries is pending in the district. Once

the portal starts functioning smoothly, this work will progress rapidly. CDO Himanshu Nagpal has directed the supervisors to download the list of beneficiaries from the portal after the login ID is approved and ensure their on-site verification and forward the application forms within a week.

Winners of 'Inhen Pankh De' painting contest awarded

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Postmaster General (PMG), Varanasi Region, Krishna Kumar Yadav awarded the winners of the 'Inhen Pankh De' (give them wings) painting contest organised by Nav Bharat Nirman Samiti. While distributing prizes to the winners of three-day painting competition at Rishiv Vedic Research, Yoga and Naturopathy Centre, Shivpur here on Saturday, the PMG said that the youth are the future of tomorrow and they can be made a great citizens by creating an urge for their culture, art, heritage and moral values from the very beginning. Yadav said that in today's busy lifestyle, not only physical but also mental, emotional and social empowerment is necessary at the level of sensitivity.



"Yoga is a priceless gift of our ancient tradition and its unique heritage of Indian culture has been adopted at the global level. Yoga is a symbol of unity of mind and body, thought and action which is valuable for human welfare", he said. The contest focused on students in the age group of 14-22 years from 16 districts of Purvanchal (eastern

UP) including Varanasi. Chief Treasurer of Varanasi division Govind Singh and international painter S Pranam Singh also awarded the students and wished them a bright future. Pooja Singh Chauhan, Palak Prajapati, Palak Kumari got first, second and third prizes respectively, while Santoshi Verma, Sachin Seth, Sneha Verma, Roshni

Verma, Mansi Pandey, Archita and Mahima were given consolation prizes. All were given medals, certificates and cash as a mark of respect. The programme was conducted by samiti secretary Brijesh Singh. On the occasion Colonel Sandeep Sharma, Dhawal Prasad, art curator Rajesh Singh and many others were also present.

Physiotherapy integral part of health sector: MGKV V-C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Vice Chancellor (VC) of Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) Prof Anand Kumar Tyagi said that physiotherapy is an integral part of the health sector. He was speaking as the chief guest in the inaugural function of a two-day National Physiotherapy Conference organised by the Department of Orthopaedics, Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS), in the Swatantrata Bhawan Auditorium of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Saturday. He inaugurated the conference by lighting the lamp.

Prof Tyagi said that certainly such events should be organised continuously to promote and propagate physiotherapy medical system. He congratulated the organisers for the successful organisation of this conference.

Another distinguished guest and V-C of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) Prof Bihari Lal Sharma said that India has been following yoga



MGKV V-C Prof AK Tyagi and other guests at a physiotherapy conference at BHU in Varanasi on Saturday.

since ancient times and today physiotherapy medical system is a modern form of yoga. He emphasised that physiotherapy medical system should be promoted for the welfare of the society and the nation. On the occasion president of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust Prof Nagendra Pandey

and trustee Prof Chandramouli Upadhyay were present as special guests. Addressing the function, Prof Nagendra Pandey said that Kashi has been a city imparting knowledge since ancient times and today the BHU is imparting advanced knowledge of physiotherapy to physiotherapists

and students from every corner of the country and abroad. The function was presided over by Director of IMS-BHU Prof SN Shankhar. Welcoming all the physiotherapy doctors and students, he inspired them to learn something new from here. The welcome address was given by

Dean, Faculty of Medicine, IMS-BHU Prof Ashok Kumar. Conference convener Dr SS Pandey while shedding light on the subject said that today hundreds of physiotherapy doctors and students from not only the country but also abroad participated in this conference including more than 25 national and five international level keynote speakers. They include former physiotherapy doctor of Indian cricket team Dr Ali Irani, SV Nirtar from Odisha, Dr PP Mohanty, Professor Emeritus of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences from Karnataka and founder of Federation of Indian Manual Therapists Dr K Pearlson, V-C of Saint Louis University, Cameroon, Prof Krishna N Sharma, senior physiotherapist from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, Dr Prabhat Ranjan and many others. Expressing his views during the conference, Dr Ali Irani from Mumbai explained how the physiotherapy treatment sys-

tem plays an important role not only in the health sector but also in the sports world. "As a result of physiotherapy treatment system, many sports injuries are being cured in time across the world", he added. Dr Shivam Sinha from the Department of Orthopedics, IMS-BHU, threw light on knee ligament injury and the physiotherapy treatment system after its repair. Dr Hanjabam Varun Sharma from the Department of Physiology expressed his views on the subject of exercise physiology and biomechanics. Dr PP Mohanty threw light on the causes of back pain and its prevention. Dr Pearlson said that by using ultrasonic radio imaging, the alignment of the spine can be effectively corrected with the help of physiotherapy treatment by manual therapy. Dr RK Mudgil from Haryana said that physiotherapy is not a new method of treatment but an ancient one. He said that Lord Shri Krishna was the first physiotherapy ther-

apist in the world because he cured one of his devotees Kubja with the help of manual therapy, who in modern language had the problem of scoliosis (curvature of the spine). He also said that yoga has been propagated in India since ancient times and Indians are getting health benefits through about 700 different types of yoga. Therefore, it is important that to regulate this ancient science of physiotherapy which has scientific evidence, a Physiotherapy Council should be formed with uniform rules all over India so that the physiotherapy can be made scientifically proven, he suggested. The programme was conducted by Dr Meenakshi Dixit and at the end of the first day's conference, Dr Shivam Sinha proposed the vote of thanks. Dr Amit Vats, Dr Raveena, Dr Avtar Dr Atul, Dr Vyom Gyanpuri, Dr Neeraj, Dr Anuj Pasari, Dr Nilesh, Dr Santosh Pandey, Dr Sanjay Bhaskar, Dr Neetu etc were also present.

BJP attacks INDIA Bloc on TN hooch tragedy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday attacked the INDIA Bloc on the hooch tragedy in DMK-ruled Tamil Nadu, saying it hopes the alliance leaders who have not spoken on the issue will at least show repentance by gathering near the Mahatma Gandhi statue in the Parliament complex and observing a moment of silence for the lives lost. Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, the party's national spokesperson Sambit Patra also slammed Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin and asked him to clarify if he was "complicit" in the incident which took place in the state's Kallakurichi district. "More than 56 people have



died... Many are still critical. More than 40 of those who died consuming spurious liquor are Dalits. This is state-sponsored murder and I am surprised that the Congress' Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul

Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Sonia Gandhi, leaders of the DMK and those of other constituents of the 'INDI Alliance' are silent on it," Patra said. It seems they are silent on this

issue as it does not serve their politics, the BJP leader charged. "When the Parliament session starts tomorrow, I hope INDI Alliance leaders will go to Mahatma Gandhi's statue to observe silence, wearing black bands on their arms, and repent for the death of people in the hooch tragedy," Patra said. "Mahatma Gandhi was against illicit liquor. Gandhiji's statue is waiting for you, his principles are waiting for you," he added. Hitting out at Chief Minister Stalin, Patra accused his government and leaders of the DMK of being complicit in the hooch tragedy. "In his first statement, the district collector had initially denied that people died after consuming spurious liquor.

He was asked to do so because the Assembly session was scheduled to start the very next day," the BJP leader alleged, and cited some media reports. Due to the district collector's denial, those who had stock of the spurious liquor continued consuming it and more than a dozen people died the next day, he added. "Of course, the (Tamil Nadu) government is complicit in this. Look at the behaviour of the chief minister. I am astonished that a tragedy of such a magnitude has struck the state yet the chief minister is absent. Till the time I came to hold this press conference, he had not visited the bereaved family members of those who died," Patra said. "Shouldn't the Chief Minister come out with a statement," the BJP leader asked.

Jaishankar, UAE counterpart to deliberate on Gaza situation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on an official visit to the United Arab Emirates will hold wide-ranging talks with his counterpart Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Besides bilateral issues, Jaishankar and Al Nahyan are expected to deliberate on the overall situation in Gaza. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Jaishankar's visit will provide an opportunity to review the entire spectrum of comprehensive strategic partnership between India and the UAE as well as regional and global developments. "External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will pay an official

visit to the UAE today," the MEA statement said. "During the visit, the External Affairs Minister will have meeting with his UAE counterpart on wide-ranging issues of the partnership," it added. The ties between India and the UAE have been on the upswing in the last few years. Following the landmark visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the UAE in August 2015, bilateral relations between the two

countries were elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Both countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in February 2022 to boost economic engagement. The trade pact provides for numerous benefits, including the elimination and reduction of tariffs, fostering an open trade environment, and enhanced market access for service providers across various sectors. The UAE is also among the top four investors in India in terms of foreign direct investments in 2022-23. About 3.5 million - strong and vibrant Indian community forms the largest expatriate group in the UAE.

Army hospital infrastructure expansion plan set in motion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The state-of-the-art Army Hospital (Research & Referral) here has set the wheels in motion for a significant expansion in its infrastructure with three new medical centres for oncology, ophthalmology and orthopaedic and joint replacement set to come up in its sprawling campus here in the next one to two years. Lt Gen Ajith Nilakantan, Commandant, Army Hospital (R&R), said this during an interaction with a group of mediapersons on the AHRR premises on Saturday. The 1200-bed hospital is a "quaternary" facility and provides treatment largely to the patients referred to it from tertiary or similar-level hospitals, he said. With its campus in Delhi spread over 256 acres, it

is the apex medical institute of the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS). "No hospital can be updated and remain relevant if it doesn't expand and keep in touch with the latest advances in technology and facilities. That is why we have recently started the construction of a full-fledged oncology (cancer) centre with all the latest facilities, an ophthalmology (eye) centre is being constructed and also an orthopaedic and joint replacement centre also being constructed," the AHRR commandant said. "We hope that in the coming one to two years these will be ready," he added. The three new centres once completed will give a boost to the medical infrastructure and services offered by the hospital, which has been located at its current campus here since the late 1990s.

The AHRR had recently announced the opening of a skin bank facility, a first-of-its-kind facility to be established within the AFMS. While the skin bank housed in its Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery was formally inaugurated on June 18 by DGMS (Army) Lt Gen Arindam Chatterjee, it had received its first skin donation on May 29, a senior official said. This donor, a woman, was the mother of an army personnel and had died at the AHRR, another official said. This skin bank is the first in the AFMS. In fact there are very few centres in the country which have a skin bank. Basically, it is for severe burns. Skin has to be replaced, otherwise infection can prove fatal, said Lt Gen Nilakantan. "It is very important to cover the exposed area and some-



times adequate skin may not be available with the same patient. So, we may have to take skin from somebody else and use it for an initial period until the base skin comes back.

As part of our organ donation system, we have an Armed Forces Organ Retrieval System, it's called AORTA (Army Organ Retrieval and Transplant Authority), and various organ donations are

organised, and this is the latest where skin donation is also part of our.... And, it's a licensed skin bank," he said. The AHRR Commandant said it is hoped that treatment of serious burn injuries will be augmented with this skin bank. This bank will serve as a centralised hub for the collection, processing, storage and distribution of skin grafts, providing a "critical resource" for military medical centres across the country. By establishing this facility, the armed forces are ensuring that the personnel and their families have access to the most advanced skin replacement therapies. The visiting mediapersons were later also taken around some of its key departments, which have cutting-edge medical equipment such as high-tech simulator for eye surgery.

Some of the mediapersons also interacted with the patients, who have recently undergone liver or heart transplant procedures at this hospital. Nilakantan said the AHRR has "all the broad specialties, and all the super specialties, and altogether we have 35 departments, including specialties and super specialties departments". "We have about 300 doctors, and 300 nursing officers. Also, we have a large number of outsourced paramedical staff, almost 1,000... Besides, 300 defence civilian," he said in response to a query. Asked what has been some of the lessons for the hospital from the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, firstly, "we had the advantage that we went for vaccination of frontline workers and our people were immunised (against Covid) at

the outset". And, with that confidence, at most of the hospitals in the AFMS, "we endeavoured to make sure that while we treated Covid, we also did not stop treatment of other diseases", the Commandant said. "This has been our endeavour. I can say it with pride that we did succeed to a large extent, including this hospital. Work here could be carried on to the fullest possible extent, with treatment of patients having other diseases as well," he asserted. "Today, we can look back and say that probably that is the way to get the whole infrastructure, medical establishment to work, in case we face similar situation in future. We were quite fully functional except for a brief period. Now, we are wiser, and next time it happens, we will be better," the Commandant said

Shuffling NEET officials no solution: Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday hit out at the Modi Government over the bureaucratic reshuffle in the National Testing Agency (NTA) after alleged irregularities in NEET-UG, saying the buck stops at the doorstep of the top echelons of the regime. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that the National Testing Agency (NTA) was projected to be an autonomous body, but in reality was made to serve the "devious interests" of the BJP/RSS. "In the NEET scam, the buck stops at the doorstep of the top echelons of the Modi Government. Shuffling the bureaucrats is no solution to the endemic problem in the Education system rotted by the BJP," he said in a post on X. For students to get justice, Modi government must be held accountable, he said. The Centre on Saturday had shunted out NTA's Director General Subodh Singh and handed over the probe into the irregularities in medical entrance exam NEET-UG to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The Education Ministry has also set up a seven-member panel headed by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to review the agency's functioning and recommend exam reforms. It also postponed the NEET-PG entrance, the fourth entrance examination to be impacted in recent days. Kharge said the NEET-PG



Exam has been postponed and in all four examinations have been either cancelled or postponed in the past 10 days. "Paper Leaks, Corruption, Irregularities and Education Mafia has infiltrated our Education system," he alleged. "This belated whitewashing exercise is of no consequence as countless youth continue to suffer," Kharge said. Slamming the postponement of the NEET PG exam, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi charged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "helpless" before the paper leak racket and "education mafia". "Now NEET PG has been postponed. This is another unfortunate example of the ruined education system under Narendra Modi's rule. In BJP rule, students are not forced to study to save their careers, but are forced to fight with the government to save their future. Now it is clear, after silently watching the spectacle every time, Modi is helpless before the paper leak racket and Education Mafia," he said in a

post in Hindi on X. "Narendra Modi's incompetent government is the biggest threat to the future of students and we must save the future of the country from it," he added. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also attacked the Modi government over the alleged irregularities in national competitive exams, including the NEET-UG, alleging that it has handed over the entire education system to the "mafia" and the "corrupt". In a post on X, she the NEET-UG question paper was "leaked" while the NEET-PG, UGC-NET and CSIR-NET exams were "cancelled". Earlier, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "No day is complete without news of cancellation of an exam because of the total incompetence of the non-biological PM and the people around him". The Communist Party of India (Marxist) demanded Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation amid a raging controversy around the National

Testing Agency (NTA) in the wake of paper-leak allegations and cancellations of exams. In a statement issued here on Sunday, the CPI (M) politburo said it is "deeply anguished over the sinister developments which have engulfed the centralised all-India examination processes". Mentioning examinations like the NEET-PG and UGC-NET, which have been cancelled, the Left party said, "The combined impact of this is irregularities and complete collapse of the processes which affects vital sectors of higher education in the country". The statement said it is not just a result of corruption, but also of centralisation, commercialisation and communalisation of education. "This is not merely the result of corruption, which is prima facie established. This has emerged from centralisation, commercialisation and communalisation in the education sphere and which is an essential ingredient of the National Education Policy," it said. The CPI(M) said asking the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the allegations is an approach to "whitewash" and demanded the minister's resignation as well as the scrapping of the NEET. "The new government summoning the services of the CBI to investigate these scams confirms its approach to whitewash, like it did with the Vyapam scam. These reflect the complete collapse of the policy prescriptions in higher education for which the entire government is accountable,

particularly the HRD minister. He must resign," the statement said. "The politburo demands that in a country as big and as diverse as India, the centralisation of governance of higher education should be reversed and the first step should be to scrap the centralised NEET exams," the Left party said. Every state should be allowed their own separate procedures for conducting admission tests to regulate entry into professional educational institutions, it added. On Saturday, the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-PG, conducted for admission to postgraduate medical courses and scheduled to be held on June 23, was postponed as a "precautionary measure" in the wake of recent allegations on the integrity of some competitive exams, including the NEET-Undergraduate (UG). On Friday, the June edition of the Joint Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and University Grants Commission National Eligibility Test (CSIR-NET) was postponed citing unavoidable circumstances and logistical issues. It came two days after the agency cancelled the University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) within 24 hours of its conduct, saying the integrity of the exam had been compromised and a massive row has erupted regarding the NEET-UG over alleged irregularities, with the issue now before the Supreme Court.

Academicians urge Centre to preserve integrity of exams

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



As the row over irregularities in competitive examinations continues to rage, several academicians on Sunday urged the Centre to preserve the integrity of examinations and stressed that overnight solutions are not possible in such complex cases. Facing flak over alleged discrepancies in competitive examinations, the Centre on Saturday shunted out National Testing Agency (NTA) Director General Subodh Singh and handed over the probe into irregularities in medical entrance exam NEET-UG to the CBI. The Education Ministry also set up a seven-member panel headed by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to review the agency's functioning and recommend examination reforms. It postponed the NEET-PG entrance, the fourth entrance examination to be impacted in recent days. The academicians said removal of National Testing Agency chief and ordering CBI probe into the NEET irregularities will build trust among students. "Since this is an issue which impacts lakhs of students, a thorough investigation into the irregularities is required for an informed decision. "Overnight solutions are not possible in such complex cases. The government has already formed high level committee.

Lets wait for all the inputs to come. We need to have patience," Govind Rangarajan, Director, Indian Institute of Science (IISc)-Bangalore, said. Anil Sahasrabudde, Chairman of National Education Technology Forum, said the decision to hand over all NTA cases to CBI has reposed confidence in the students. "The announcement of high-powered committee with Dr Radhakrishnan as chairman and six other eminent academic is timely corrective action to build the trust amongst students. "The Radhakrishnan committee shall pave the way for robust transparent zero error process of end to end examination system fixing accountability of every functional and desired checks and balances creating confidence among students," he said. Mohandas Pai, Chairman of Manipal Global Education Services, said there should not be retest for the 24 lakh candidates who appeared for NEET. "It will be unfair to put every-

body through the process. Retest should be at the only those centers where things have gone wrong. Government is taking steps to ensure integrity of examination," he said. University Grants Commission Chairman M Jagadeesh Kumar welcomed the setting up a panel on examination reforms. "The Committee's emphasis on recommending reforms in the examination process, enhancing data security protocols, and improving the NTA's structure and functioning will strengthen our national entrance examination system. Protecting student's interests and their future is our top priority," he said. The Centre is under fire over alleged irregularities in competitive exams NEET and NET. While the medical entrance examination question paper was allegedly leaked according to an investigation by the Bihar Police, UGC-NET was cancelled a day after it was conducted following inputs that the integrity of the examination was compromised.

Children with chronic skin diseases face emotional trauma

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Naveen Rawal, a 15-year-old struggling with acne, says in a choked voice, "Having acne made me feel like everyone is staring at my face. I try to cover it up with makeup, but kids at school still make fun of me. It made me not want to go out or be seen by anyone". Similarly, 12-year-old Jagat, who battles eczema, shares, "My skin always looks red from itching. People think I have something contagious and avoid sitting next to me in the class. Sometimes, I feel really lonely because no one wants to be my friend". Nine-year-old Rema, coping with alopecia, questions why she looks different from her peers, saying, "I don't have any

hair on my head. Kids at school call me names like 'baldy' and laugh at me. It makes me not want to take off my hat or go to school." These testimonies reflect the emotional and social challenges besides bullying and stigmatisation children with chronic skin diseases such as acne, alopecia, eczema, psoriasis, and vitiligo often face affecting their self-esteem and social interactions. This has been pointed out by a study published in JAMA Dermatology. In general, girls reported more stigma than boys. The study said over 73 per cent of participants reported experiencing stigma related to their condition. This stigma was strongly linked to lower quality of life, increased

anxiety, and depression among affected children. The study covered 1671 children, 58 per cent of them girls, with mean age being about 14 years. About 56 per cent of the children self-reported high disease visibility, while 50.5% reported moderate disease severity. "The general burden of skin disease is sometimes difficult for people to appreciate, and even as dermatologists, we don't always know how to ask questions about quality of life or how our perception correlates with the lived experience of patients and their caregivers," said study author Michele Ramien, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatric Dermatology at the University of Calgary, Pediatric



Dermatologist at Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and President of the Canadian Dermatology Association. "This study clearly shows, with validated instruments and tools, that there is a big burden and stigma associated with skin disease, and the experience of stigma is real," she said. "It's something we need to work on asking about more and addressing with patients." The study was conducted at 32 pediatric dermatology centers in Canada and the United States between 2018 and 2021, using the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Instrumentation System Stigma-Skin to examine the links between disease visibility and severity and mental

health and quality of life. Nearly three quarters of children with skin disorders reported some amount of stigma. Stigma scores correlated strongly with reduced quality of life, depression, anxiety, and poor peer relationships. In addition, about 29% of parents said they were aware of their child being bullied, primarily at school, which was strongly associated with stigma. In general, girls reported more stigma than boys, and children with hyperhidrosis and hidradenitis suppurativa were more likely to have higher depression and anxiety scores. "Some conditions didn't have as much perceived stigma as we had thought, such as atopic dermatitis, while others had

more than we thought, such as excessive sweating," Ramien said. "That speaks to the disconnect in physician perceptions and serves as a reminder to ask children and families about their experience - and to find the best way to do that without making it burdensome or stigmatizing." When physicians ask about mental health challenges and quality of life, they may be better able to refer children and families to the care they need. For instance, specialized dermatology treatment may help decrease the severity and visibility of the skin condition, and mental health resources may help reduce stigma, false beliefs, and internalized perceptions.

Friend in need

Both India and Bangladesh stand to beneficially feed off each other with the new tranche of agreements

New Delhi and Dhaka have signed a comprehensive bunch of collaborations that includes pledging to begin negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), deciding to launch a medical e-visa facility for Bangladeshis and agreeing to send a technical team to discuss the Teesta river water-sharing, besides announcing the opening of an Assistant High Commission in Rangpur. Additional goodies in the bouquet include new train and bus services, export of 40 MW power to Bangladesh via the Indian grid, an inland container depot at Sirajganj and 350 training slots for Bangladeshi police officers. For India, four major imperatives have significantly driven the nation's increased strategic engagement with Bangladesh: Improving the country's economic standing, attending to the healthcare requirements of Bangladeshis, increasing India's presence in the region and attempting to counter China's increasing influence in Bangladesh. In office since 2008 and earlier heartily praised for



leading her country's economic and social development, Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is now facing difficulties in post-pandemic recovery. Her plan to use the bilateral relationship to address these issues includes the outreach to New Delhi in a major way. It makes sense that New Delhi is responding to her advances with a bit more warmth than usual this time, in part because of Beijing's looming shadow in the background. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina deepened their partnership with a "futuristic vision" for transformative cooperation during the latter's two-day visit to India from June 21.

India holds a special place in Bangladesh's history, particularly owing to the 1971 Liberation War wherein India played a key role. However, relations between the nations became tense during military rule in the mid-1970s, marred by anti-India sentiment. But the shared history has helped forge a strong bond, with Modi's tenure since 2014 giving a new fillip to bilateral ties. Earlier, a significant shift occurred in 1996, when Hasina took over as the Prime Minister for the first time; since then, bilateral relations have steadily improved. Since 2019, the two leaders have met on 10 occasions, ushering in an era of remarkable transformation and strengthening bonds. Prime Minister Hasina, who began her fourth consecutive term in January 2024, joined six other world leaders at Modi's swearing-in ceremony on June 9, 2024. However, challenges persist, such as border management, illegal migration, the National Register of Citizens, Rohingya and river water sharing, necessitating ongoing dialogue. Bangladesh has established an island for the persecuted Rohingyas and seeks India's help in persuading Myanmar to repatriate the displaced minorities. The Modi-Hasina partnership has the potential to further cement India-Bangladesh relations, navigating these challenges and leveraging their shared vision for mutual prosperity.

PICTALK



A herd of wild elephants bathes in water to get respite from the heat, in Kamrup

PTI

Venture Capital and Private Equity drive growth globally

These financial engines reshape industries and foster entrepreneurship, marking a pragmatic shift in the global financial landscape

In recent years, venture capital (VC) and private equity (PE) have emerged as powerful catalysts for innovation and economic growth globally. This surge represents a pivotal shift in the financial landscape, reshaping industries and fostering entrepreneurship in unprecedented ways. Venture capital, known for financing early-stage startups with high growth potential, has experienced remarkable expansion due to technological advancements and evolving consumer demands. Startups leveraging technologies such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, fintech and sustainable energy have become prime targets. These funds not only provide crucial capital for research, development and market expansion but also enable entrepreneurs to scale their innovations rapidly and disrupt traditional industries. Simultaneously, private equity has broadened its scope beyond traditional domains to include sectors like healthcare, education, consumer goods and infrastructure. PE firms typically invest in established companies seeking growth opportunities or



undergoing strategic transformations. By injecting capital, implementing operational efficiencies and providing strategic guidance, PE firms play a pivotal role in enhancing competitiveness, expanding market reach and driving sustainable value creation. Several key factors have contributed to the robust growth of VC and PE investments: **Technical Advancements** Breakthroughs in technologies such as cloud computing, big data analytics and blockchain have revolutionised business models and accelerated innovation cycles. These advancements have lowered barriers to entry for startups and empowered established companies to adapt and thrive in a digital-first economy, making them attractive targets for PE investments seeking to optimise operations and enhance

profitability. **Globalisation and Market Access:** Increasing interconnectedness has facilitated cross-border investments, allowing VC and PE firms to diversify their portfolios and tap into emerging markets with untapped potential. This global expansion not only increases investment opportunities but also exposes companies to new markets, customers and strategic partnerships, driving growth and scalability. **Shift in Consumer Behavior:** Evolving consumer preferences towards sustainability, digital solutions and personalised experiences have driven demand for innovative products and services. VC-backed startups are at the forefront of meeting these evolving needs, disrupting traditional industries and creating new market opportunities. **Supportive Regulatory Environment:** Favorable regulatory frameworks and Government policies aimed at fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and capital formation have played a crucial role in facilitating VC and PE investments. These policies provide incentives for

investors, reduce regulatory barriers and create a conducive environment for startups and growth-stage companies to thrive. **Institutional Investor Participation:** Growing interest from institutional investors such as pension funds, sovereign wealth funds and endowments has significantly bolstered VC and PE markets. These investors seek diversification, higher returns and exposure to innovative sectors, driving substantial capital inflows into VC-backed startups and PE-funded enterprises. Despite the promising opportunities presented by the VC and PE boom, challenges persist. Market volatility, valuation pressures, regulatory complexities and geopolitical uncertainties pose risks that demand careful risk management strategies. Furthermore, maintaining ethical standards, sustainable practices and alignment with stakeholders are critical for long-term success and value creation in the VC and PE ecosystem.

(The writer is CEO of Cosmos Financial Group; views are personal)



MAYANK SINGHAVIE

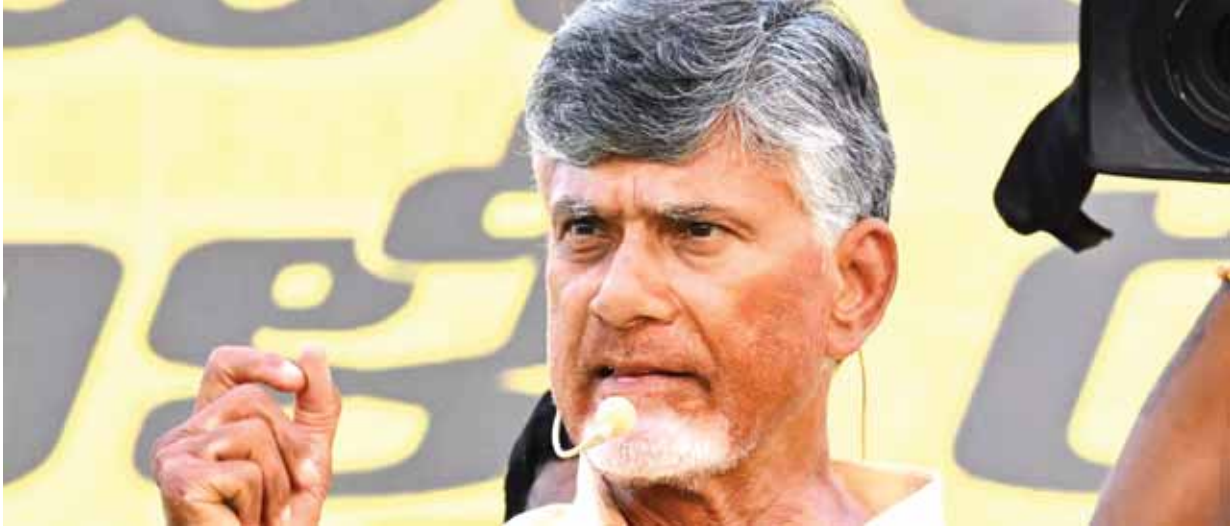
Naidu's comeback will redefine Andhra's future

After being sidelined for over two decades, Naidu's resurgence signals a major shift in the State's politics and sets the stage for a renewed focus on development

The recent swearing-in of Nara Chandrababu Naidu as Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister was a significant event for Naidu personally, his Party and Indian politics. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top BJP leaders witnessed the 74-year-old politician taking the oath for the fourth time, marking a significant political comeback. Despite being marginalised in State and national politics for over two decades, Naidu is grateful for his new role. He has once again proven that one should never underestimate a politician until they are out of the game.

The triumphant return of Naidu as the Chief Minister, along with the emergence of his Party, Telugu Desam, as the second largest group in the current NDA Government, signifies a shift in power dynamics. A year ago, Babu's predecessor, Jagan Mohan Reddy, was comfortably placed to win another term. Then, because the opposition was divided. Pawan Kalyan was not with the TDP and the BJP was still deciding whether to let the TDP join the NDA coalition again. Babu was accused of corruption and TDP workers felt disheartened.

Several factors contributed to Naidu's comeback. Apart from the anti-incumbency sentiment, the caste coalition of Pawan Kalyan's Janasena, the BJP and the TDP played a crucial role. Jagan's neglect of infrastructure and agriculture also negatively affected the people, further contributing to Naidu's resurgence. Naidu has been a survivor. He started his political career as a junior minister in 1978 and has since held various positions in the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). He has served as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh multiple times, overseeing significant development projects and facing political controversies. Throughout it all, Naidu kept up his unwavering spirit. Naidu has announced that the 2024 election will be his last, a move intended to emotionally appeal to voters while grooming his son Lokesh as his successor. This strategic deci-



sion could significantly impact the Naidu dynasty's future in Andhra Pradesh politics.

At first, Babu stayed in the shadows of his father-in-law and Telugu Desam chief N.T. Rama Rao, but eventually became indispensable. He gained valuable experience and insights into national politics during the National Front and United Front Governments. His Party was part of the V.P. Singh, Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral and later Vajpayee Governments, signifying that no party was untouchable.

Naidu and his Party have had a fluctuating relationship with various central Governments. However, their current participation in the Modi Government is particularly notable. With TDP's support for the Modi Government, Naidu is in a position to negotiate and advocate for the interests of Andhra Pradesh. As for the State, Babu has become the State's CEO again. As chief Minister, Naidu rubbed shoulders with Tech Giants like Bill Gates in his earlier terms. He brought investment opportunities to Hyderabad and transformed it into Cyberabad. He secured funding for infrastructure from agencies like the World Bank and developed Hyderabad overall. However, the mistake was that he should have focused on developing

“DURING HIS FOUR DECADES OF POLITICAL CAREER, NAIDU, AGED 74, HAS PROVED HIMSELF A SURVIVOR. HE WAS MUCH AHEAD OF HIS TIME IN HIS FIRST AND SECOND TERMS

other parts of the State. In his fourth term, Naidu should avail the opportunity to bring back the importance of Andhra Pradesh, once the country's rice bowl. Naidu's top priority is securing additional funds for Andhra Pradesh, which is a crucial step towards the State's development. Naidu's vision for Andhra Pradesh's development includes reviving long pending irrigation projects like the Polavaram project to boost the State's agricultural sector. With his Party's support, Naidu is determined to maximise the State's resources and drive development.

“We are not negotiating on the composition of the Narendra Modi cabinet when it comes to State interests,” was his response to a question about the TDP securing only one cabinet minister and one Minister of State in the Modi cabinet. However, they still hope to secure more positions during the next expansion. The second important task is to build the Andhra Pradesh State capital, Amaravati. His predecessor, Jagan Mohan Reddy, suspended this ambitious project during his two terms. Now that Babu is back in charge, he aims to complete Amaravati. He will put pressure on the Centre to secure funds for building capital, various new projects and his six welfare schemes. Being a show-



KALYANI SHANKAR

man, he would like to project Amaravathi as a model capital. The State is facing a severe financial crisis. There is a significant shortage of funds, with a total debt of around Rs 14 lakh crores, including Rs 12 lakh crore borrowed from various sources and pending bills of Rs 1.5 lakh crore.

During his four decades of political career, Naidu, aged 74, has proved himself a survivor. He was much ahead of his time in his first and second terms. He projected himself as a forward-thinking, pro-technology and tech-savvy Chief Minister. The atmosphere is excellent, as Naidu has the comfort of a kingmaker. Being part of the Modi Government gives him a chance to share power. He has no opposition in the Assembly, with YSRCP reduced to just 11 seats. The TDP needs to address the issue of reservations for Muslims. This topic could lead to conflicts with the BJP. Naidu's positive relationship with Modi is expected to last a year, after which they could pressure the Modi Government on this issue. Additionally, the TDP must resolve the corruption case as Naidu is currently out on bail. His conduct in his fourth term is crucial for his future and that of his son Lokesh.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE IN BENGAL

Madam — This is my response to the news item “Bengal Gov. alleges snooping by State Police,” published on June 21. I am too dumbstruck to react to such news. If the governor of a State feels insecure in the Raj Bhawan, how safe and secure are ordinary citizens of the State of Bengal? Earlier, there were allegations that Governor C.V. Ananda Bose had molested a Raj Bhawan lady staffer. This implies that Bose is himself a threat to the security of lady staffers. His run-ins with the CM of Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, are well known. Bengal has become the theatre of the absurd, where everything imaginable as well as unimaginable is possible. If people holding high constitutional offices become the “torchbearers” of misconduct, it will be hard to find a place of refuge. Even this quote offers cold comfort to the people of Bengal. Life is tragic and absurd and none of it has any purpose at all, says T. C. Boyle, an American novelist. Or does absurdity have no upper limits at all?

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

HEAT TAKING TOLL OF HEALTH

Madam — Shocking observations have been revealed in a survey conducted by the network organisation World Weather Attribution (WWA). The temperature has increased by 35 times; the current year is the highest. In the Northern Hemisphere region of the Earth, it has been observed that there is a severe heat wave before the monsoon season. The current year or season is the one with the highest heat stress. There has been a huge increase in greenhouse gases all over the world. Similarly, the increasing use of fossil fuels generates huge amounts of heat. However, the risk of heat stroke caused by such heat is predicted to increase. In this case, the body's cooling system completely collapses and if not treated in time, there is a possibility of human death. These shocking observations have been

Paper leak rows



propos the news story “After NEET comes NET row,” published on June 21, this is my response. As if the NEET fiasco was not enough, we now have the NET exam being cancelled. With the alarming frequency of paper leaks happening in our country, it would not be an exaggeration to say that

it has become a norm rather than an exception. Merely rolling a few heads in the NTA will not serve the purpose until structural issues are addressed.

NTA, which conducts entrance tests like CUET, JEE, NEET and UGC-NET, has failed to live up to expectations and rather failed miserably. It cannot guarantee the cybersecurity at thousands of examination centres and the conduct of invigilators. With such a huge number of students competing for such a small number of seats, crooked operators have all the opportunities to exploit the parents. NTA can learn a thing or two from the GRE and TOEFL as to how to conduct online exams smoothly. The end objective should be that not a single student should face injustice and suffer.

Aarohi Sharma | Jammu

recorded in the survey conducted in South America, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, Belize and El Salvador. All in all, people's lives on this next earth will be difficult and unbearable due to heat.

Dattaprasad Shiroadkar | Mumbai

AIR POLLUTION MENACE

Madam — The Health Effects Institute recently released a report on air pollution. In the world, there has been a great deal of pollution due to air pollution and it has been reported that as many as 81 lakh deaths have occurred in the year 2021. India and China have the highest number of deaths and they account for 54 per cent of the total deaths. The year 2021 is set to have more deaths due to air pollution than any previous year. In 2021, around 169,000 children under the age of five died in India due to air pollution alone. India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Ethiopia are the countries. Air pollution is the fourth leading cause of death in many countries after high blood pressure, a poor diet and tobacco. Just read this news. Small particles in the air cause

death. How can this air pollution be eliminated or reduced? For this, vehicle smoke should be reduced. Along with that, trees should be planted and nurtured in large quantities. Clean water is also an important factor. It is advisable to reduce the use of gasoline and diesel vehicles and use battery-powered vehicles instead of that. Thinking should also be started on how to reduce plastic waste, or not at all. In this regard, it is necessary to make a lot of efforts at the Government level. Only then will there be a reduction in air pollution. Citizens should know the importance of polluted air. Today, there is a lot of air pollution in the cities of Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai. Many school-children have developed respiratory disorders and have to drive vehicles on the road for a day. When there was Corona and at that time all the traffic was closed, the air pollution was very low and the clear sky was its indicator.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

REDISCOVERING THE JOY OF READING



SHAINY SHARMA

Reading habits offer countless benefits, from intellectual stimulation to overall wellbeing

Reading is essential for those who seek to rise above the ordinary. Cultivating a habit of reading can have numerous positive effects on our life starting from intellectual stimulation to emotional well-being. Finding time to read regularly is a valuable investment in oneself, whether one prefers to use physical books or e-books. There is no warmer feeling than reading your favourite book on a rainy day, covered in a cozy blanket with a cup of coffee in hand. The smell of fresh books, hiding pieces of an old love such as dry flowers, old photographs and hazy letters as bookmarks for books as they say have and will always be eternal gifts. In a world hustling and bursting with technological advancements every now and then, the way everyone engages with literature has undergone a significant transformation. The traditional means of reading a book have found themselves in tug-of-war with their digital and audio counterparts. Today, carrying a book library in the pocket makes it easier for people to access a wide range as per their convenience thereby removing the biggest barrier of travelling to a bookstore or a library and then selecting for the favourite one. Moreover, e-books provide an environmentally friendly access when compared to physical books, as they reduce the demand for paper, which significantly reduces the demand for wood pulp from trees and transportation from printing facilities to distribution centres and then to bookstores or directly to consumers. Moreover, the production of physical books involves various materials and processes, including ink, chemicals and packaging materials, which can generate waste and pollution. E-books do not involve these manufacturing processes, thereby reducing the environmental footprint associated with production and waste disposal. While reading e-books requires electronic devices that consume energy, the environmental impact can be mitigated by using energy-efficient devices, renewable energy sources for charging and by considering the longer lifespan and potential reuse of electronic devices compared to physical books.



But what depresses the most is when these e-books are available on devices such as a tablet or a phone resulting in the biggest sources of distraction and thereby reducing the focused reading time. Moreover such devices also offer multimedia enhancements (like videos or interactive elements), which can either enhance or distract from the reading experience, depending on individual preferences. Some people prefer the tactile experience of physical books. Several research and studies reflect a complex interplay of factors influencing the preference for e-books versus physical books. Physical books tend to offer better comprehension, retention and a more comfortable reading experience, while e-books provide convenience, portability and cost efficiency. The choice between the two often depends on the specific needs and preferences of the reader. Instead of immersing oneself in a book, social media browsing encourages quick, fragmented reading of short posts or articles, which can ultimately diminish the habit of sustained, deep reading. The immediate gratification and constant novelty of social media can make reading books seem less appealing or rewarding by comparison. Even when attempting to read, the temptation to check social media notifications or browse feeds can interrupt concentration and disrupt the reading experience. It's important to note that the environmental impact of e-books versus physical books can vary depending on factors such as the energy efficiency of devices used, the source of electricity and how frequently devices are replaced but what matters is that the user also recognise the unique benefits of physical books, leading to a balanced approach where both formats coexist in their reading habits. There's no better way to learn, evolve and relax than reading books. *(The writer is an educator, views are personal)*

Kallakurichi liquor tragedy shows how deep the rot runs

The nexus between local politicians, law enforcement and illicit brewers makes mockery of prohibition laws in the State

Even as this column is being written on Friday at 1 pm, the death toll in Kallakurichi hooch tragedy has risen to 49 with doctors saying that more persons are expected to leave earth to meet their maker. It is only because of the unprecedented increase in the number of persons succumbing to the spurious liquor that this incident has come to national limelight. The truth is that many people lose their lives on a daily basis after the consumption of spurious liquor in Tamil Nadu. Chief Minister M K Stalin has declared a solatium of Rs 10 lakh each to the families of the deceased and this would help him to buy peace with the people. A commission of inquiry has been set up with a retired judge of the Madras High Court as chairman to find out the reason behind the liquor tragedy with instructions to submit a report within three months. The relatives of the victims allege that the bootlegging is done with the patronage of the DMK MLAs and nobody can stand up to him. The MLAs representing Rishivandiyam and



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Sankarapuram constituencies (both belong to the DMK) are a law unto themselves. "Not even a flower shop will function here without the knowledge of the MLA. How can we accept that he did not know about illicit hooch being brewed here," according to K Ilavarasu (34), owner of a mobile phone repair shop in Karunapuram who has been quoted by a local newspaper. R Perumal (35), a resident of Madhavcheri who lost his brother, says, "Hooch will be brought in packets and sold at a common spot in the village. People from the Scheduled Caste community and Most Backward Class community buy them. When it comes to hooch,

there is no rich or poor or dominant or oppressed caste. Police will come for inspection, but will silently leave after taking bribe." Last year saw 17 persons getting killed in nearby Villupuram district after consuming spurious arrack brewed in the nearby hilly region. Resident "Not even a flower shop will function here without the knowledge of the MLA. How can we accept that he did not know about illicit hooch being brewed here," asks K Ilavarasu (34), owner of a mobile phone repair shop in Karunapuram. R Perumal (35), a resident of Madhavcheri who lost his brother, says, "Hooch will be brought in packets and sold at a common spot in the vil-

lage. People from the Scheduled Caste community and Most Backward Class community buy them. When it comes to hooch, there is no rich or poor or dominant or oppressed caste. Police will come for inspection, but will silently leave after taking a bribe." Residents of Karunapuram allege that a lethal cartel of police-DMK politicians-illegal brewers exist in the region. "Those daring to complain against them are silenced once and for ever. Jungle raj prevails in this region," said a relation of one of the victims. Prohibition has been found to be a total failure in Tamil Nadu. Dravidian politics thrived on the money generated by the sale of spurious

liquor and to generate more money the State Government banned the manufacture and sale of arrack (the poor man's scotch). The daily wage earners toiling in the fields from day break to dusk get some relief when they consume arrack which was available at reasonably low rates. With the Government's decision to ban the production and sale of arrack, thousands of jobs along with the tax revenue from sale of the stuff was lost to the Government. Toddy tapping too has been banned in the State, home to the founders of the Dravidian movement who were not averse to the idea of sundowners. By early 2000, the private

retail outlets too downed the shutters and the public sector Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMC) took over the entire liquor trade in the State. The Government's was the last word on the brand to be consumed by the tipplers and this was a violation of fundamental right granted under the Constitution of India. Only the brands of liquor manufacturers who were willing to part with a fixed amount to the powers that be were allowed to be sold through the retail outlets. The result was that the market was flooded with poor quality brands which charged premium rates. The daily wage earners were left with no options other than

the bootleggers. Had the Government not banned toddy tapping and brewing of country liquor, the mass murders of the kind which we saw in Kallakurichi would not have happened. Period. The objective of this writup is not to encourage people to take drinks. The illegal stuff that is brewed by bootleggers is made with toxic chemicals like ammonium sulfate and insects like centipedes. There was an instance in Kerala where arrack was made out of ethyl alcohol which was used for preserving dead bodies in medical colleges. Should we furnish more details? *(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)*

Centralised testing faces credibility crisis



SHIVAJI SARKAR

High costs, allegations of corruption and systemic inefficiencies underscore the need for a comprehensive overhaul of the 'One Nation, One Test' policy



The country needs to go back to drawing board on centralising entrance tests as the big ones - JEE, NEET, CUET and UGC-NET - are having far too many glitches and questions raised on the National Testing Agency (NTA). The NEET scam and NET cancellation have shocked the youth and raises questions on credibility of the testing agency. Let the country note that within 48 hours of NEET results, four students took their own lives. Should not the country rethink on the One Nation-One Test? The tests are designed to make coaching redundant. Few have an idea of the cost of one NEET - National Eligibility-cum-Entrance (Undergraduate) Test, previously called Pre-Medical Exam. It costs over Rs 400 crore borne by the parents of 2406079 candidates registered for the 2024 exam at the rate of Rs 1700 fee per applicant. The system does not say how much is the profit for NTA. It is common knowledge that no entrance fee is fully spent. Should it not be considered as a tax on the unemployed knowledge seekers! There are approximately 108,915 MBBS seats available across 706 medical colleges for NEET 2024. Around 55,000 of these seats are in Government medical colleges; the rest are in private medical colleges. One wonders why private colleges are included which have a devious fee structure backed by severe capitation fees. The quality of faculty is also questionable. Of course, even newly set-up many State medical colleges too have such issues. Many even do not have a cardiologist or neurologist. Add the cost of coaching, travelling and other expenses, together to cost quite a few hundred crores more, big drain on the economy plus parental and societal stress. The Kota coaching system has an estimated business of Rs 600 crore. There are reports that the UGC-NET having nine lakh aspirants was cancelled as there was paper leak. Each question paper was sold for Rs 5,000 for transfer



THE NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY-CUM-ENTRANCE (UG) TEST COSTS OVER Rs 400 CRORE BORNE BY THE 2406079 CANDIDATES REGISTERED FOR THE 2024 EXAM AT THE RATE OF Rs 1700 FEE PER APPLICANT. THE SYSTEM DOES NOT SAY HOW MUCH IS THE PROFIT FOR NTA. SHOULD IT NOT BE CONSIDERED A TAX ON THE UNEMPLOYED KNOWLEDGE SEEKERS?

to the students' Telegram app. For NEET Rs 30-35 lakh per student was charged as alleged by a student witness, who got the paper with its answers a day before. It's possibly one of the biggest scams that spanned from Vadodara and Godhra to Patna and where not! It has sparked countrywide protests. No wonder the moves against generation of black money has not succeeded. Add to this the various recruitments stalled for scams, 13 in UP, many in West Bengal and the worst known VYAPAM in Madhya Pradesh. The irregularities are thriving with the highest jobless numbers. The NEET scam got exposed and how parents paid Rs 66 lakhs and more. Eight students from the same examination centre in Haryana who secured all-India rank (AIR) 62 to 69, had largely similar roll numbers. On 5 May 2024 at two NEET centres in Haryana, students received a wrong question-paper set, which was taken back after 25 minutes. A paper scam in Gujarat, featured a Vadodara-based coaching centre and at least 16 students who each paid Rs 10 lakh to pass the exam. Fresh accusations arose when news reports of a paper leak emerged only days after conclusion of the competitive exam. A Godhra school teacher is accused of the NEET exam cheating scandal. Rs 7 lakh were found in his car, while cheques worth 2.50 crore were found from the office of the director of the coaching centre. Reportedly, this money was given by the students. "There is a perception of mismanagement by the NTA," says ABVP general secretary Yagyawalkya Shukla. BJP MP Rakesh Sinha calls for severe criminal action

against any nexus found between paper setter and coaching institutes. It has rattled everyone. The reality is the NTA does not have competence to hold the examinations as many professional autonomous institutions have been doing for decades. None could raise a finger against any of them, including the All India Institute of Medical Science. They also selected students with proper aptitude. An issue that has cropped up now with many of the national institutions with CUET in particular. The only action against weeks after the NEET fiasco has been the cancellation of the examination for grace mark students. The NTA appears to be loosely controlled organisation. The tests are gateway to careers and future professional excellence. If it is mired with malpractices and money power, the future of the nation is at stake. Would those adapting devious methods could ever have ethical bindings! The implementation is shoddy. The NTA does not conduct the tests on its own. Implementers are largely burgeoning private sector 'service providers', IT companies and emerging outsourcing infra organisations for conducting such mammoth tests. The competence of NTA for ensuring cyber-security at thousands of centres is doubtful. Even invigilators and other staff are hired casually leaving the system vulnerable to attacks, pilferage and compromise. The suspicion over the countrywide coaching organisations calls for rethink on the composition of the tests. Are they giving instructions or have it emerged as the most corrupt money-minting machines? Should not the coun-

try do away with this organised malpractice? The examinations need to be tailored in a way that students do not need any coaching. National convenor of Sanskriti Utthan Nyas Devendra Singh has demanded cancellation of the NEET test. The Shiksha Bachao Andolan founded by Dinanath Batra and Atul Kothari also wants the test cancelled. Too much centralisation could be breeding irregularities. It is a diverse country with diverse State boards, languages and systems. Apart each genre of professional institutions has varied needs for selections. The previous systems of selections by many professional institutions, organised by themselves have rarely raised an eyebrow. The NTA needs structural reforms. Conducting professional examinations are challenge. Minister for Education Dharmendra Pradhan says, "We will take the final call". The entire university system cribs over CUET - Central University Entrance Test. It forces students to take a test even for subjects, which are not in demand. The huge numbers have put off academic calendars for the past few years. Let universities conduct their own admissions as before to rid the system of over centralisation, delays and trauma to the students and their families. The academics must put their heads together to have least of central admission examinations and more decentralised process not only to keep the process sanitised but also put India on the world map for its education, that such compromised systems sully. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*

TMC to take battle to BJP camp over NEET-NET

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Cornered by the BJP in Bengal on the TET (teachers' eligibility test) issue the Trinamool Congress has decided to take the battle back to the enemy camp by launching a counter attack on the NET issue (national eligibility test). Accordingly the party is all set to strongly raise in Parliament the alleged scam that took place in the NEET-UG and NET exams involving more than 35 lakh aspirants. For this the TMC is likely to coordinate with all opposition outfits including the Congress Party, inside sources said. "What has taken place in the NEET and NET exams is a matter of grave concern ... it is a big big scam and has to be dealt with strongly ... we will raise the issue strongly in parliament and go to the end of it," senior TMC parliamentarian Sudip Bandopadhyay said a day before the new Lok Sabha meets on Monday. National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted every year to select candidates for medical courses. The students



who qualify NEET get the opportunity to secure a seat at any Medical colleges in any State. On the other hand joint CSIR UGC-NET is conducted to determine the eligibility of aspirants for the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF), Assistant Professor positions, and PhD admissions in accordance with the eligibility criteria laid down by the University Grants Commission. "The Government is doing some eye-wash by removing this officer or that whereas the students are agitating on the roads ... this is not done ... you cannot play with the future of the young boys and girls ... the

Government will have to take responsibility and explain the conduct of its officials ... whereas nothing has been done till now," Bengal Education Minister Bratya Basu said adding the issue needed a nation-wide agitation. "Till now what we have seen is only the tip of the iceberg ... the nation is not satisfied with this ... a thorough investigation is needed and the real masterminds who are sitting at the helm have to be caught," Basu said. Incidentally the Bengal ruling outfit has itself been fighting with its back against the wall on a number of corruption cases

including the cash-for-teachers-jobs scam that saw about half a dozen of its ministers and MLAs going to jail. Reacting to the TMC's claims, Union Minister and Bengal BJP president Sukanta Majumdar said that "it is not TMC Government which is stuck neck-deep in corruption ... investigations have started and not a single person found guilty will be spared," adding the TMC leaders should look at their own leaders before criticizing others. "The people of Bengal have lost count of scams that this Government has done in the past 10 years of his rule ... let them first take stock of those scams and bring the real culprits out," he said. The Left on the other hand hit out both at the BJP and the TMC. Senior leader and central committee member Suján Chakrabarty said, "BJP Government has come out with its own version of scams to match those done by the TMC ... for Mamata Banerjee Governments SSC and TET scams the Modi Government has come out with NEET and NET scams."

Farakka Treaty with Bangladesh: TMC attacks Modi Government

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress is unhappy with the Centre for unanimously taking decisions on the renewal of the 1996 Ganga Water Sharing Treaty with Bangladesh. Senior TMC MP Derek O' Brien on Sunday questioned the propriety of Centre's action in going ahead with "Farakka-Ganga" treaty without consulting Bengal holders. "The state is a party to the treaty. Even our dues for the previous treaty have not been cleared," O'Brien said adding, "Dredging of the Ganga has been stopped. It is the primary reason for floods and erosion. This is a plan to sell off Bengal." The TMC leader's statement came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's discussions with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina regarding the Ganga Water sharing treaty. The Prime Minister had on Saturday said that discussions would be held at technical level between India and her eastern neighbour regarding the renewal of the 1996



Ganga water treaty for which and Indian technical team would soon visit that country. Talks on Teesta water is likely to come up in that course, sources said. Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who shares a good relationship with Bangla Prime Minister had however exercised immense pressure on the Centre stalling the talks on the sharing of Teesta waters when Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister. The TMC Government has been protesting against what is called a faulty Farakka Treaty that had caused large-scale erosion and inundation in this part of the border owing to Ganga and its tributaries gobbling up large chunks of lands every year.

India Space Congress to unite Global Space leaders for three-day event

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Policy makers, administrators of space agencies from different countries, and entrepreneurs would gather here for the three-day India Space Congress that will begin from Wednesday. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman S Somanath, India's space regulator IN-SPACe head Pawan Kumar Goenka, space administrators from Italy and Australia, and Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti are among the dignitaries scheduled to attend the event. The India Space Congress (ISC), organised by the Satcom Industry Association-India (SIA-India) will have the theme 'Bridging Boundaries and Transforming Tomorrow' and will seek to elevate India's space capabilities through international collaborations. The event offers exclusive networking opportunities, platforms for startups, and academic insights. It also seeks to foster innovation and progress in space exploration, uniting government, industry, and startups towards a future of boundless



possibilities, a statement from the organisers said. Australian High Commissioner to India Philip Green OAM, Italian Space Agency President Teodoro Valente, and Director (Space Programs), Australian Space Agency, Arvind Ramana are among those attending the ISC. Major reforms such as the Space Policy 2023, liberalized FDI Policy 2024, the new Telecom Act, the unveiling of norms, guidelines and procedures by the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) for implementation of the space policy underscore the importance of partnerships in leveraging collective strengths and resources for mutual benefit, the statement said.

Hindu Janajagruti Samiti alarmed by election of 'anti-national' MPs

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS), a collective of various Sanatana Dharma activists have expressed concern over the ever increasing anti-national activities in India and the election of Bharat Todo (Break India) activists as members of Parliament. The HJS is watching with apprehension the election of Amrit Pal Singh Sandhu, a Khalistani separatist leader, Sheikh Abdul Rashid (Baramulla), a Kashmiri extremist and Virato Fernandez (Goa) the Congress leader who is against the Constitution of India in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, according to Ramesh Shinde, national spokesman, HJS. Shinde further stated that Rashi is on record declaring that he would not sing Vande Matharam and the national anthem of the country. In a release to the media, Shinde pointed out that all the three persons mentioned above are part of Breaking India brigade. "They got elected on anti-India platform and they would be the ones who enact legislations for Indians in our parlia-



ment. This is a matter of concern," said Shinde who announced that a Universal Hindu Meet is being scheduled at Goa from 24 June 2024 to 30 June 2024 to discuss about the new situation. According to HJS, an initiative to destroy and demolish Sanatana Dharma was underway across the world and funded by Open Society Foundation and various Islamic and Christian fundamentalist organization. "We are of the view that such an attack against Sanatana Dharma could be prevented by establishing a Hindu Rashtira. A temple for Lord Rama was built and consecrated at Ayodhya. Similarly, we should

strive hard to form a Hindu Rashtira working on the principles drawn out by Lord Ram himself," said Shinde. The week-long conclave being hosted by HJS would see Sants, philosophers, writers and thinkers from across the world assembling at Goa to devise means to save Sanatana Dharma and also to form the Hindu Rashtira. "We in Sanatana Sharma are not against any religions. What we ask is equal rights and opportunities for the followers of Sanatana Dharma. The breaking India forces are spreading false and fabricated reports that non-Hindus are not safe in India, a blatant lie," said Shinde.

Four AFMS officers clinch record 32 medals in 43rd World Medical and Health Games

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Four Armed Forces Medical Service (AFMS) Officers have brought laurels to India by clinching a record 32 Medals in the 43rd World Medical and Health Games held in Saint-Tropez, France, from June 16 to 23, defence ministry said here on Sunday. Giving details, officials said these Officers, namely Lt Colonel Sanjeev Malik, Major Anish George, Captain Stephen Sebastian, and Captain Dania James, made history by winning 19 Gold Medals, 09 Silver Medals and 04 Bronze Medals in the in World's largest sports event for health professionals. The breakdown of the victories are as follows: Lt Col Sanjeev Malik VSM, Five Gold Medals (Above 35yrs Male Category) - Events: 800m, 1500m, 3000m, 5000m, Cross Country and 4x100m Relay. Maj Anish George, Four Gold, Six Silver and Two Bronze Medals (Under 35 yrs Male Category) - Events: 100m, 200m, 400m,

800m, 1500m, 5000m, Javelin, Shotgun, Discus Throw, Hammer Throw and Power Lifting. Capt Stephen Sebastian, Six Gold Medals (Under 35 yrs Male Category) - Events: 100m, 200m, 400m, Long Jump, Hammer Throw and 4x100m Relay. Capt Dania James, Four Gold, Three Silver, Two Bronze Medals (Under 35 yrs Female Category) Events: 100m, 200m, 4x100 Relay, Javelin, Discus Throw, Shot Put, Badminton Solo, Badminton Doubles and Powerlifting. The DGAfMS Lt General Daljit Singh has congratulated the Officers for the spectacular performances and wished them more laurels in the future. The World Medical and Health Games, often regarded as the Olympic Games for Health Professionals, has evolved into the most prestigious global sporting event within the medical community. With a legacy dating back to 1978, the Games annually attract over 2500 participants from more than 50 different nations.

BJP to uproot corrupt JMM led alliance, claims Chouhan

PTI ■ RANCHI



Union minister and BJP's election in-charge for Jharkhand Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Sunday that the saffron party will form the next government in the state by uprooting the "corrupt" JMM-led coalition from power. Chouhan and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is BJP's election co-incharge for Jharkhand, held a meeting with party leaders, MLAs, MPs, and workers in Ranchi to prepare strategies for the assembly elections in the state due later this year. He said the BJP had

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I congratulate the party leadership, booth workers and people of Jharkhand for the achievement," he said. The party will work under the leadership of Babulal Marandi and form the next government in Jharkhand in the upcoming assembly polls, he said. Chouhan alleged that the current JMM-led dispensation in the state is "India's most corrupt government". "There is loot everywhere in the state, be it sand, coal, mines and minerals. The chief minister is in jail and many leaders are being arrested on charges of corruption," he said.

Mayawati reinstates...

From Page 1 half months. Akash Anand will be seen campaigning not only in UP but also in different states of the country as the young face of the party. This means that Mayawati is seeing a political future in Akash Anand and he can be the face of BSP in the future.

In the meeting of BSP's national office-bearers, Mayawati also decided to reduce the party's membership fee from Rs 200 to Rs 50. Notably, Congress, which fought the Lok Sabha polls in UP in alliance with the Samajwadi Party and is part of the INDIA bloc, won

six seats in the state. Collectively, the opposition INDIA bloc has won 43 seats in UP. The Bharatiya Janata Party, which was locked in a tense competition with the SP, managed to bag only 33 seats, thus marking a steep decline compared to its 2019 UP tally of 63 seats.

Man-animal conflict...

From Page 1

The Forest Department should put a fence around the settlements to prevent the animals from trespassing into the houses, he said, adding that the same should be helpful in keeping the domestic animals from trespassing into the forests. It will not cost much to put fencing around the human settlements as the Forest department at Wild Life Department have sufficient funds to spend on the same, said Bahuguna. He pointed out that tigers, unlike leopards, are peace loving animals and will not attack human beings until they are provoked. "Moreover, the tigers do not have the capability to jump over a six-feet tall fence," said Bahuguna.

People aiding ultras to be...

From Page 1

Meanwhile, addressing an attestation cum Passing out Parade of 16th BRTC Batch of J&K Police at Subsidiary Training Centre, Talwara, Reasi Lt-Gov Manoj Sinha said Terrorism is breathing its last and this has made our neighbor, the exporter of terror, desperate. The recent terror acts are a sign of our enemy's desperation. "We must hunt down the terrorists and their aides harboring them," he added. Reiterating the resolve of the administration, police, and security forces to root out terrorism from J&K, the Lt Governor asked the recruits to work as a force multiplier in neutralizing the terror threats. A total of 860 recruit constables of the border battalion took part in the parade upon completing their training. They were administered an oath to perform their duties with dedication and honesty. Nine people, including seven pilgrims, were killed and 41 others were injured in the dastardly terror attack on a pilgrim bus in the Reasi

district on June 9. Three back-to-back terror strikes followed in which two terrorists were eliminated and one CRPF jawan made the supreme sacrifice in the Hiranagar encounter. Six soldiers were injured in the exchange of firing in the Chatergala area of Doda earlier this month. Speaking on the emerging threats of drug trafficking, cybercrime and radicalization, he emphasized the need to ensure a high level of motivation and professionalism in the police to keep a step ahead of the adversaries. "I have great faith in the Jammu and Kashmir Police, army and our security agencies. They are not only responsive to the safety and urgent needs of citizens but also effectively tackling terrorism in cyberspace," Sinha said. Director General of Police RR Swain also extended his wishes to the recruits and asked them to work honestly and dedicate themselves to the people's service.

CBI gets cracking in NEET...

From Page 1

The complaint further alleges that certain isolated incidents occurred in a few States during the conduct of the NEET (UG) 2024 examination. "For transparency in the examination process, the ministry of education, after a review, has decided to entrust the matter to the CBI for a comprehensive investigation," it said in a statement. The Ministry has also requested CBI for investigation into the role of public servants, if any, connected with the conduct of the examination and also into the entire gamut of events and the larger conspiracy. The Bihar Police has been investigating a NEET-UG paper leak matter since last month and has even arrested over a dozen persons. Subsequently, Gujarat police

arrested half a dozen individuals, including the head of a coaching centre in connection with alleged cheating at an examination centre for NEET-UG in Godhra. The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) detained two teachers who run a private coaching centre in Latur district in connection with the alleged irregularities in the conduct of the medical entrance exam NEET-UG. Ten aspirants have approached the Supreme Court, seeking directions to the CBI and the ED to investigate the alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG. The petition has also sought a direction to the Bihar Police to expedite the investigation in the case and file a report before the apex court. In a separate matter, the Supreme Court sought

responses from the Center, the NTA and others on various petitions, including those seeking cancellation of the NEET-UG 2024 exam and a court-monitored investigation. The Supreme Court also halted proceedings on similar petitions in various high courts. Alongside NEET-UG, three other exams—UGC NET, CSIR-UGC NET, and NEET-PG—have also faced controversy. The UGC NET was cancelled by the Centre a day after the exam, while the CSIR-UGC NET and NEET-PG exams have been postponed. To combat exam malpractice, the central government has notified the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. This act aims to prevent unfair practices in public examinations and address

related issues. Additionally, the ministry of education has constituted a high-level committee of experts chaired by K Radhakrishnan, former chairman of ISRO, to ensure transparent, smooth, and fair conduct of examinations. Meanwhile, officials of the NTA said its website and all its other web portals are fully secure, and reports that these have been compromised and hacked are wrong and misleading. The clarification comes amid a raging row over alleged irregularities in competitive exams, including the NEET-UG and the UGC-NET. The education ministry on Saturday set up a panel to review the NTA's functioning, recommend exam reforms and ensure data security.

Kejriwal...

From Page 1

The petition also states in political terms that due to being a critic of the ruling party at the Centre, he has become a victim of ED's displeasure and discriminatory process. The petition states that the High Court has also overlooked something while reviewing the lower court's order. This stay should not be maintained even for a day. This is a matter related to personal freedom. Therefore, this court should order Kejriwal's immediate release. The Delhi high court's stay, issued on Friday, halted the bail granted to Kejriwal by the Rouse Avenue Court on Thursday. The high court said it was reserving the order for two to three days to thoroughly review the entire case records. Vacation judge Nyay Bindu had approved Kejriwal's bail

on the condition of furnishing a bond of Rs 1 lakh. Following the bail order at approximately 7:56 pm, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) sought to delay the signing of the bail bond by 48 hours to allow for an appeal, a request that the court denied. The bond was instead directed to be produced before the duty judge on Friday. The ED on Friday moved quickly to challenge the trial court's bail order, seeking an urgent hearing before Justices Sudhir Kumar Jain and Ravinder Dubeja. Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, representing the ED, argued that the agency had not been given a fair chance to present its case during the initial proceedings. Supreme Court in May had granted interim bail to Kejriwal to allow him campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. He returned to jail on June 2 after the interim bail period allowed by the top court came to an end.

Shah mulls steps to save people from flood...

From Page 1 systems into infrastructure designs, better handling of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF), and the enhancement of community awareness and preparedness programmes. Emphasising the role of advanced technology, Shah advocated for the optimum use of satellite imagery from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). This would aid in effective flood and water management by providing accurate and

timely data on water levels and flood risks, he told the officials, as per the statement issued here. Recurring flooding of the Brahmaputra is a major issue particularly for Assam and the Northeastern region in general as it claims scores of lives and inundates thousands of hectares every year. This year too many people have been killed, hundreds rendered homeless and communication lines and road networks snapped in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh which

witnessed cloudburst on Sunday. Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Jammu and Kashmir have also witnessed flooding in recent years. During the meeting, the Minister said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's Disaster Management is moving forward with a 'Zero Casualty Approach'. The Minister also highlighted the importance of upgrading the forecast system for river water levels. This included modernising the equipment

used in flood forecasting to improve the accuracy and reliability of flood predictions, thereby facilitating better preparedness and response. Shah also reviewed preparations to deal with Glacial Lake Outburst Floods, which have caused significant damage in regions like Sikkim and Uttarakhand in the past few years and are now becoming a recurring feature. He called for detailed studies on recent flood events to enhance future preparedness and

response strategies. The integration of natural drainage systems into road construction designs was recommended to mitigate the risk of road inundation during floods and maintain infrastructure integrity and safety during heavy rains. Shah stressed on the need for a long-term, comprehensive policy to combat floods effectively. This policy would involve coordination among various departments and the timely implementation of advisories

issued by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), he said as per the statement. The Minister instructed the IMD and the CWC to expedite the recalibration of all equipment used in flood forecasting to ensure its effectiveness and accuracy. Alongside flood management, Shah addressed the need for preventive measures against forest fires, such as regular removal of dry leaves and conducting mock drills.

Netanyahu reiterates claim of US withholding arms despite denial

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet on Sunday that there had been a "dramatic drop" in US weapons deliveries for Israel's war effort in Gaza, doubling down on a claim that the Biden administration has denied and underscoring the growing strains between the two allies.

Netanyahu told his Cabinet that the drop had occurred four months ago, without specifying which weapons, saying only that "certain items arrived sporadically but the munitions at large remained behind."

The spat highlights how high tensions have surged between Israel and Washington over the war in Gaza, particularly surrounding the Israeli military's conduct in the beleaguered territory and the harm to civilian life there. President Joe Biden has delayed delivering

certain heavy bombs since May over those concerns, but his administration fought back last week against Netanyahu's charges that other shipments had also been affected.

Netanyahu told the Cabinet that he was driven to release a video in English last week after weeks of unsuccessful pleas with American officials to speed up deliveries. He said a resolution appeared close.

"In light of what I have heard over the past day, I hope and believe that this matter will be solved soon," he said, without elaborating.

Netanyahu's video last week sparked an uproar among critics in Israel and was met with denial and confusion from White House officials. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. was "perplexed" by Netanyahu's claims. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

said, "We generally do not know what he's talking about."

His remarks came hours after Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant traveled to Washington for meetings with senior officials. A statement from Gallant's office said he would discuss "maintaining Israel's qualitative edge in the region" but made no mention of the weapons issue.

The war in Gaza, which was sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, has tested the US-Israel relationship like never before. While the US has staunchly supported Israel's aims of freeing hostages taken into Gaza and defeating Hamas, it has grown increasingly concerned over the rising Palestinian death toll and the humanitarian crisis created by the war.

Biden has felt pressure from progressive Democrats to take a tougher line against

Israel, and he has sharpened his warnings to Netanyahu over military tactics in the Gaza Strip. But after threatening to impose a more sweeping ban on arms transfers over an assault on Rafah, the administration has avoided any suggestion that Israel's expanding push into the southern Gaza city has crossed a red line. During an election year, Biden is also facing critics on the right who say he has moderated his support for an essential Mideast ally. For Netanyahu, the growing daylight with the US also poses political risks and opportunities. His critics see the public spats as the result of a leader prepared to wreck important alliances and tarnish Israel's image in the world for political gain. But the rift grants the long-serving leader a chance to show his base that he isn't beholden to the US and that he is putting Israel's interests first.

Thousands of Iran-backed fighters offer to join Hezbollah in its fight against Israel

Beirut (AP): Thousands of fighters from Iran-backed groups in the Middle East are ready to come to Lebanon to join with the militant Hezbollah group in its battle with Israel if the simmering conflict escalates into a full-blown war, officials with Iran-backed factions and analysts say.

Almost daily exchanges of fire have occurred along Lebanon's frontier with northern Israel since fighters from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip staged a bloody assault on southern Israel in early October that set off a war in Gaza. The situation to the north worsened this month after an Israeli airstrike killed a senior Hezbollah military commander in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah retaliated by firing hundreds of rockets and explosive drones into northern Israel.

Israeli officials have threatened a military offensive in Lebanon if there is no negotiated end to push Hezbollah away from the border.

Over the past decade, Iran-backed fighters from Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan

and Pakistan fought together in Syria's 13-year conflict, helping tip the balance in favour of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Officials from Iran-backed groups say they could also join together again against Israel.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said in a speech Wednesday that militant leaders from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries have previously offered to send tens of thousands of fighters to help Hezbollah, but he said the group already has more than 100,000 fighters.

"We told them, thank you, but we are overwhelmed by the numbers we have," Nasrallah said.

Nasrallah said the battle in its current form is using only a portion of Hezbollah's manpower, an apparent reference to the specialised fighters who fire missiles and drones.

But that could change in the event of an all-out war. Nasrallah hinted at that possibility in a speech in 2017 in which he said fighters from Iran, Iraq, Yemen,

Afghanistan and Pakistan "will be partners" of such a war.

Officials from Lebanese and Iraqi groups backed by Iran say Iran-backed fighters from around the region will join in if war erupts on the Lebanon-Israel border. Thousands of such fighters are already deployed in Syria and could easily slip through the porous and unmarked border.

Some of the groups have already staged attacks on Israel and its allies since the Israel-Hamas war started October 7. The groups from the so-called "axis of resistance" say they are using a "unity of arenas strategy" and they will only stop fighting when Israel ends its offensive in Gaza against their ally, Hamas.

"We will be (fighting) shoulder to shoulder with Hezbollah" if an all-out war breaks out, one official with an Iran-backed group in Iraq told The Associated Press in Baghdad, insisting on speaking anonymously to discuss military matters. He refused to give further details.

Sunak hit with another betting allegation

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is on Sunday dealing with yet another senior party official being involved in placing bets on the date of the general election before July 4 was confirmed, as the scandal engulfing his top aides continues to be investigated by the country's gambling watchdog. The British Indian leader, who has said he was "incredibly angry" on learning about the allegations that emerged earlier this month, now finds the Conservative Party's chief data officer also being investigated by the Gambling Commission for allegedly betting on the timing of the election before the date had been announced. Following the revelations first reported in 'The Sunday Times', Nick Mason is said to have taken a leave of absence but denies wrongdoing. It comes as a fresh blow for the Sunak-led Tories, already trailing far behind the Opposition



Labour Party in all pre-election opinion polls, after his director of campaigns, Tony Lee, and his Tory MP candidate wife, Laura Saunders, were named earlier in the election date betting investigations. It followed reports of Sunak's close protection officer being arrested by the Metropolitan Police on suspicion of misconduct over placing an election date bet and Sunak's parliamentary aide, Tory MP candi-

date Craig Williams, also under investigation. While betting is legal in the UK, any bets placed with the advantage of insider information could fall within the purview of illegality. "There are multiple investigations happening. It's right they're allowed to proceed. They're independent and necessarily confidential," Sunak told reporters earlier this week. "There's also a criminal investigation, and these are poten-

tially criminal matters. If anyone is found to have broken the rules, they should not only face the full consequences of the law, but I will make sure they are booted out of the Conservative Party," he said. Since then, he and senior party leaders have refused to comment on ongoing investigations, with a senior Cabinet minister condemning the actions of his party colleagues. "It looks like one rule for them and one rule for us. That's the most potentially damaging thing," said Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove, who is not seeking re-election next month. The Gambling Commission has only admitted "investigating the possibility of offences concerning the date of the election" and declined to provide any details on the "ongoing investigation." "We are not confirming or denying the identity of any individuals involved in this investigation," a spokesper-

son said. Meanwhile, the Opposition parties have continued to pile pressure on the governing Conservatives over the spiralling betting scandal.

"Rishi Sunak promised integrity, professionalism and accountability, instead his weakness means he has overseen the same sleaze and scandal that have come to epitomise the last 14 years of Tory government. Rishi Sunak must take immediate action and suspend all those implicated in the Tory betting scandal," said a Labour Party spokesperson. The Liberal Democrats have also called on Sunak to personally intervene after the allegations. "This is now an all-out scandal at the heart of Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party. Sunak must personally intervene to order a Cabinet Office inquiry and suspend all those under investigation by the Gambling Commission," said Lib Dem deputy leader Daisy Cooper.

'New military offensive against terrorism to be discussed in Pakistan Parliament'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Sunday announced to consult the parliament over the issue of a fresh military offensive against terrorists after former prime minister Imran Khan's party demanded that any new operation should be discussed in the highest forum. The decision to launch 'Azm-e-Istehkam' operation was taken on Saturday at the apex committee meeting of the National Action Plan, a strategy approved in 2014 to eliminate militancy from the country.

A day after the plan was announced, lawmakers from the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) said the matter should have been discussed in Parliament which was the highest forum to decide about any new operation. The Minister first criticised the PTI by say-

ing that the party's chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was present in the meeting when the decision was taken, but later also announced that the matter would be placed before the parliament.

"We will also bring this issue to the (Parliament) House where debate will be held on this topic. If they have any objection, when this issue comes to this House, then they can also speak on it," he said. Khawaja also accused the PTI of siding with terrorists.

"They (PTI) are standing with the terrorists by protesting here today. They are protesting against the martyrs of the Pakistan Army and the army that is still making sacrifices against terrorism," he said. He also said that the PTI leadership had not backed off from the May 9 stance when the party supporters attacked military installations, as he lam-

basted the party for changing its stance to serve its interests. Earlier, speaking to the media outside Parliament House, PTI chief Gohar Khan demanded that only parliament was empowered to take a decision on military operations. "It is our demand that if there is any operation — whether intelligence-based or full-fledged or in certain districts or villages or tehsils — it is necessary to take this Parliament into confidence," he said, adding that no matter how empowered a committee was, it could not supersede Parliament.

Former speaker and PTI leader Asad Qaiser repeated the same demand. "I simply demand that if any decision has been taken about operation, then it be brought before Parliament and Parliament be taken into confidence," he said.

Philippines stands firm after clash with Chinese Coast Guard, aims to avoid war

AP ■ MANILA

The president of the Philippines said Sunday his country would not yield to "any foreign power" after Chinese forces injured Filipino navy personnel and damaged at least two military boats with machetes, axes and hammers in a clash in the disputed South China Sea, but added the Philippines would never instigate a war. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. flew with his top generals and defence chief to the western island province of Palawan, which faces the South China Sea, to meet and award medals to navy personnel who came under assault by the Chinese coast guard Monday as they attempted to deliver food and other supplies to an outpost on the hotly contested Second Thomas Shoal. Videos and pictures of the chaotic face-off made public by the military showed Chinese coast guard personnel hitting a Philippine navy boat with a wooden bar and seizing a bag while blaring sirens and using blinding strobe lights. The Chinese government said

that its coast guard had to take action after Filipino forces defied warnings not to stray into what China calls its own offshore territory, a claim long rejected by rival claimant governments and international arbitrators. The violent confrontation sparked condemnation and alarm from the US, the European Union, Japan, Australia and other Western and Asian nations, while China and the Philippines blamed each other for instigating it. Marcos's key advisers said Friday that his administration has no plan to invoke the country's mutual defence treaty with the United States. "We are not in the business to instigate wars," Marcos told Filipino forces. "In defending the nation, we stay true to our Filipino nature that we would like to settle all these issues peacefully." In Monday's face-off at the shoal, Marcos said "we made a conscious and deliberate choice to remain in the path of peace." The Filipino navy special operations group personnel who came under attack used only their bare hands to push back the Chinese,

some of whom pointed knives at them, said Philippine military chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. "We stand firm. Our calm and peaceful disposition should not be mistaken for acquiescence," Marcos said. "History itself can tell that we have never, never in the history of the Philippines yielded to any foreign power." Chinese officials in Manila and Beijing did not immediately comment on Marcos's remarks. Marcos praised about 80 officers and personnel involved in Monday's supply mission, including one who lost his right thumb during the high seas confrontation, saying they "exercised the greatest restraint amidst intense provocation." He issued an appeal: "Continue to fulfil your duty of defending the nation with integrity and respect as you have done so far." The territorial disputes, which involve China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, have long been seen as a flashpoint that could pit the US against China if high seas confrontations escalate into armed conflict.

Drone likely launched by Houthi rebels hits ship in Red Sea

Dubai (AP) : An aerial drone likely launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels struck and damaged a vessel in the Red Sea on Sunday, officials said, the latest attack by the group targeting the vital maritime corridor. The attack comes as the US has sent the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower back home after an eight-month deployment that saw it lead the American response to the Houthi assaults. Those attacks have seen shipping drastically drop through the route crucial to Asian, Middle East and European markets in a campaign the Houthis say will continue as long as the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip rages on.

The drone attack happened around dawn off the coast of the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. It said the vessel sustained damage but its mariners on board "were reported safe." It did not elaborate on the extent of the damage, but said an investigation was ongoing.

The private security firm Ambrey identified the ship involved as a Liberia-flagged container ship bound for Qingdao, China.

The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack. However, it can take the rebels hours or even days to acknowledge their assaults.

The Houthis have launched more than 60 attacks targeting specific vessels and fired off other missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed a total of four sailors. They have seized one vessel and sunk two since November. A US-led airstrike campaign has targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say. The Houthis have maintained that their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the United States or Britain. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the Israel-Hamas war — including those bound for the Houthis' main benefactor, Iran.

One more victim dies day after Arkansas grocery store shooting

Little Rock (AP): Police said a fourth victim has died a day after a shooter opened fire at an Arkansas grocery store, wounding nine others and riddling cars with bullet holes as panicked bystanders scrambled for cover.

The person died Saturday evening, Arkansas state police said in a statement, listing a total of 14 people as hit by gunfire: "11 civilians, two law enforcement officers and the suspect."

The dead were identified as Shirley Taylor, 62, Callie Weems, 23, Roy Sturgis, 50, and Ellen Shrum, 81 — "all civilians," according to the statement.

The wounded range in age between 20 and 65, police said. Four were still hospitalised, including a woman who was in critical condition. The wounded agents were identified as Fordyce Police Officer James Johnson, 31, who was released from a hospital Saturday evening, and Stuttgart Police Officer John Hudson, 24, whose injuries

were said to be minor. Police said the suspect is Travis Eugene Posey, 44, of New Edinburg, and he will be charged with four counts of capital murder.

"He was treated for non-life-threatening injuries after exchanging gunfire with law enforcement" and was then released to police custody and taken to the Ouachita County Detention Centre, police said in the statement. Police have not released a motive. A media briefing to update about the shooting was announced for 2 pm Sunday.

As of Friday, a state police spokesperson did not know if Posey had an attorney, and there was no immediate response to a phone message left with the agency's public information office Saturday night. The Ouachita County Sheriff's Office confirmed Saturday that he was being held at the detention centre but had no information about a possible lawyer. No inmate record was online for him yet. The shooting took place

around 11:30 am Friday at the Mad Butcher grocery store in Fordyce, a city of about 3,200 people located 65 miles (104 kilometres) south of Little Rock.

Roderick Rogers, a member of the city council, said he called the sheriff when employees at his restaurant nearby notified him of the shooting. When he got there, he saw people running for cover in every direction, even one running to the hospital nearby.

"People were just jumping into cars to get to safety," Rogers said Friday.

Video posted on social media showed at least one person lying in the parking lot, while another captured multiple gunshots ringing out. Images from reporters on the scene showed a slew of bullet holes in the store's window, and spent shell casings strewn throughout the parking lot. In video images, local and state agencies could be seen responding with at least one medical helicopter landing nearby.

Melania Trump stays out of public eye as Trump runs for president

AP ■ WEST PALM BEACH

After Melania Trump missed key events in her husband's presidential bid earlier this year — from the kick-off of the 2024 election in Iowa to Donald Trump's Super Tuesday victory party — reporters asked the former first lady whether she planned to hit the campaign trail. Her response: "Stay tuned." But since making that comment in March, after she and Donald Trump voted in Florida's primary, Melania Trump has largely refrained from public appearances. The few exceptions have included a couple of fundraisers in April and their son's high school graduation. The former first lady noticeably did not accompany the presumptive Republican presidential nominee on any of the days of his more than month-



long hush money trial in New York. She was not there last month for the guilty verdict or the following day for his remarks at Trump Tower. She also did not appear June 14 at a 78th birthday party organised for Trump by his fan club, or at any of the campaign rallies he has held in recent months. Her absence during the trial

and for other important moments is unusual, said Katherine Jellison, a professor of history at Ohio University who studies first ladies. But Jellison said maybe it should not come as a surprise as Melania Trump seems reluctant to follow the traditional public role of a politician's wife. As first lady, she also kept

a low profile and she was not a regular presence on her husband's losing 2020 presidential campaign. "But everything the Trumps do seems to be against the standard playbook of how candidates and spouses behave," Jellison said. Melania Trump's behaviour deviates from how other politicians have relied on their spouses. Sometimes male politicians turn to their wives to try to reach out to female voters. Candidates also may be joined by their spouses as a way of giving voters more of a sense of what the candidate is like outside the political arena. During this year's GOP primary, for example, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' wife, Casey DeSantis, travelled with him, granted interviews and formed a coalition named Mamas for DeSantis before he suspended his bid for the nomination.

Iowa flood displaces residents; US heatwave persists

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Floodwaters forced people out of their homes in parts of Iowa, the result of weeks of rain, while much of the United States longed for relief Saturday from yet another round of extraordinary heat.

Sirens blared at 2 am in Rock Valley, Iowa, population 4,200, where people in hundreds of homes were told to get out as the Rock River could no longer take rain that has slammed the region. The city lacked running water because wells were unusable. Mayor Kevin Van Otterloo said a state helicopter was on its way to help but was called off when boats were able to reach stranded residents. "We've had so much rain here," he said. "We had 4 inches last night in an hour and a half time. Our ground just cannot take anymore."

Gov. Kim Reynolds declared a disaster for 21 counties in northern Iowa, including Sioux County, which includes Rock

Valley. In drone video posted by the local sheriff, no streets were visible, just roofs and treetops poking above the water. In South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem declared an emergency after the southeastern part of the state received heavy rainfall. The town of Canton, 30 miles (48 kilometres) south-east of Sioux Falls, has received 18 inches (45.72 centimetres) of rain. Several highways were closed, including a key stretch of Interstate 29 south of Sioux Falls that later reopened. Sioux Falls, the state's largest city, had more than 7 inches (17.7 centimetres) of rain in three days. "Even though the rain is slowing down, we need to keep vigilant," said Noem. "The worst of the flooding along our rivers will be Monday and Tuesday." Elsewhere in the US, the miserable grip of heat and humidity continued. The National Weather Service said roughly 15 million people were under a heat warning — the highest level of alert — while another

90 million were under a heat advisory. Millions across the country have had their lives disrupted by stretches of unusually high temperatures. Last year the US experienced the most heat waves since 1936, experts said. An AP analysis of data from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention found that excessive heat contributed to more than 2,300 deaths, the highest in 45 years of records. Temperatures around 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius) were predicted for Washington, D.C., and Richmond, Virginia, while Philadelphia; Newark, New Jersey; Columbus, Ohio; and Detroit were bracing for the high 90s.

Heat-related hospital visits in New York state lately were 500 per cent higher than on the average June day, according to the Department of Health. "We still have this prolonged heat wave across portions of the Ohio Valley and into the

Northeast," weather service meteorologist Marc Chenard said. "We get a little bit of relief by early in the week, at least in the eastern US, the Northeast, but in general above-normal temperatures are going to cover a large portion of the country even into next week."

In southeastern Michigan, DTE Energy said 7,400 customers remained without power as of Saturday afternoon due to storm-related outages, down from 75,000 earlier in the week.

A heat index of around 100 Fahrenheit (37.8 Celsius) didn't stop Florida couple Judy and Bill Watson from watching the Tigers play the White Sox at Detroit's Comerica Park. Their afternoon visit was a milestone: Bill Watson has now seen games at all 30 MLB ballparks.

"We're from Florida. You might be interviewing the wrong people about heat," the 71-year-old Bradenton man said with a smile.

Mcap of three of top-10 most valued firms jumps ₹1.06 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of three of the top-10 most valued firms jumped Rs 1,06,125.98 crore in holiday-shortened last week, with HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank emerging as the biggest gainers. Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 217.13 points or 0.28 per cent. While HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Infosys were the gainers from the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Hindustan Unilever and ITC faced a combined erosion to the tune of Rs 1,01,769.1 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank zoomed Rs 52,091.56 crore to Rs 12,67,056.69 crore. ICICI Bank added Rs 36,118.99 crore taking its valuation to Rs 8,13,914.89 crore. The mcap of Infosys climbed Rs 17,915.43 crore to Rs 6,35,945.80 crore. However, the market



valuation of Reliance Industries tumbled Rs 32,271.31 crore to Rs 19,66,686.57 crore. LIC lost Rs 27,260.74 crore from its mcap which stood at Rs 6,47,616.51 crore. ITC's valuation eroded by Rs 14,357.43 crore to Rs 5,23,858.91 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever dropped by Rs 8,904.95 crore to Rs 5,73,617.46 crore. The mcap of TCS tanked by Rs 8,321.6 crore to Rs

13,78,111.45 crore and that of Bharti Airtel diminished by Rs 7,261.72 crore to Rs 8,04,262.65 crore. State Bank of India's valuation declined by Rs 3,391.35 crore to Rs 7,46,454.54 crore. In the ranking of the most valued firms, Reliance Industries retained the number one place followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, LIC, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.

FPIs infuse ₹12,170 crore in equities in June on hopes of policy reform continuation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Staging a strong comeback after general election results, foreign investors pumped Rs 12,170 crore in Indian equities so far in June, mainly driven by expectations of continued policy reforms and sustained economic growth. This came following a net withdrawal of Rs 25,586 crore from equities in May on poll jitters and more than Rs 8,700 crore in April amid concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields. With the latest investment, the total outflow now stood at Rs 11,194 crore so far in 2024 (till June 21), data with the depositories showed. Going ahead, Sunil Damania, Chief Investment Officer at MojoPMS, said foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) inflow will remain constrained due to the high valuations currently commanded by the Indian equity market. FPIs had been waiting on the sidelines for the election results. So far in 2024, barring



March (Rs 35,000 crore inflow), they have been pulling out from India. "Though the general election results were sort of a surprise and resulted in a weaker than expected mandate, markets celebrated that yet again a stable government is formed and government continuity is maintained," Kislay Upadhyay, smallcase Manager and founder of FidelFolio, said. Further, business sentiment remained buoyant, and policy continuity added confidence to markets.

Damania attributed three primary reasons for this positive inflow. "First, the continuity of the government assures ongoing reforms. Second, the Chinese economy is decelerating, as evidenced by a 12 per cent decline in copper prices over the past month. Third, certain block deals in the market have been eagerly taken up by FPIs," Damania said. However, these FPI inflows are concentrated in a select few stocks rather than being widespread across the market or sectors.

Additionally, the anticipation of a pro-growth budget has also lifted investor sentiment, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said. Early trends in FPI activity in June indicate buying in financial services, telecom and realty and selling in FMCG, IT, metals and oil and gas, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. Additionally, FPIs invested Rs 10,575 crore in the debt market during the period under review, data with the depositories showed. Foreign investors have consistently invested in Indian debt in 2024, except for April, with a total investment of Rs 64,244 crore. India's inclusion in the debt index positively impacts debt inflows. "Irrespective of the short-term changes in flows, we believe India remains an attractive long-term investment destination for global investors," Nimesh Chandan, CIO, Bajaj Finserv Asset Management Ltd, said.

Daikin to sell 2 million units of AC in FY25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Air conditioner maker Daikin expects to manufacture two million units in India this fiscal and has plans to scout for more export opportunities by making India a manufacturing hub. The company has already sold 7 lakh units of residential air conditioner (RAC) in the first three months of the year, helped by a blistering summer this season and expects over 50 per cent growth, said Daikin Airconditioning India Chairman and Managing Director Kanwaljeet Jawa. Daikin, which has started its third manufacturing unit in India at Sri City in Andhra Pradesh, is investing in compressor manufacturing here and aiming to manufacture five million units by 2030. "The mandate is of 5 million units, which includes 4 million units for the domestic market and 1 million of exports by 2030 and we are very confident," Jawa told PTI.

BII bullish on Indian EV ecosystem, expects to invest USD 300 million in 3 years: MD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

British International Investment, UK's development finance institution, is betting big on the Indian electric vehicles ecosystem and expects to invest another USD 300 million in the next three years, according to its MD and Head of Technology & Telecoms, Abhinav Sinha. The company, which has backed Mahindra group's electric vehicles (EV) arm besides other startups like Euler Motors, Turno and Battery Smart, has already invested around USD 300 million in the Indian EV sector and sees further investment opportunities in EV manufacturing, components and financing segments in the country. "India has quite an evolved auto market... On the EV side, the penetration right now lags the rest of the world... The (overall) penetration of EVs in India is something like 6 per cent and we see it quite easily expand, double and more than double quite quickly," Sinha told PTI in an interview. He further said, "the leader today is China, but for India to be significantly ahead of where it is today... We think it's a very achievable sort of an objective... So we're quite bullish." Sinha was responding to a query on how British International Investment (BII) sees the EV ecosystem in India compared to the other markets in the world and investment opportunities in the country. By 2030, he said there will be a "massive level" of EV



penetration in public transportation in India and there will be "quite a bit of traction on the passenger (electric) cars, as more and more people adopt it." "I would imagine even if it's not as much as China, it'll be ahead of Europe and the US in the way it's going and all the push coming from the government as well as the logic of total cost of ownership," Sinha said. On BII's investments in India, he said, "We have invested (USD) 300 million so far in this whole EV space... We've backed Mahindra in India, on their EV platform and that's a very significant investment for us, almost USD 250-million." Moreover, it has also made investments in Euler Motors, a startup commercial EV manufacturer, Turno, an EV distribution and financing for small businesses and individuals and Battery Smart, a battery-swapping network for electric two- and three-wheelers. When asked about BII's further investment plans in the Indian EV ecosystem, Sinha said, "It's hard to say an

exact number but we have invested USD 300 million over the last three years and I would expect a similar sort of pace going forward." On the strategy for future investments, he said, "What we realised is that a lot of focus has to go on earlier stage investments and these tend to be smaller, even though the number of our typical sizes in these spaces are like USD 5 million to USD 10 million investments. Maybe the numbers may not stack up quite a bit initially but as these companies become bigger we then follow with another investment." For BII in India, he said climate in general has the highest attention and within that "EV is probably going to be the largest area for us to invest." "So, we will continue investing in the manufacturing side and we will extend that in the components and the financing side. It is a space which will take a lot of investment. We will invest across the entire value chain," Sinha said.

New home supply falls 13 per cent in April-June as builders launch fewer projects due to polls: PropEquity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fresh supply of housing units is estimated to decline 13 per cent during this quarter across nine major cities with builders launching less number of projects because of the general election, according to real estate data analytic firm PropEquity. PropEquity data shows that new housing supply in April-June is estimated to fall to 97,331 units across nine major cities as against 1,11,657 units in the year-ago period. Pune and Hyderabad are witnessing fewer launches

during this quarter while the new supply in Delhi-NCR has almost doubled. Samir Jasuja, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director of PropEquity, attributed the fall in new supply of housing units to the Lok Sabha election which took place in this quarter. The new supply is 7 per cent lower from the January-March quarter of this calendar year, he added. As per the city-wise data, new launches of residential properties in Delhi-NCR are likely to rise 95 per cent to 11,118 units during April-June this year from 5,708 units



a year ago. The new supply of housing in Bengaluru is likely to rise 21 per cent to 14,297 units from 11,848 units.

In Chennai, the launches are likely to rise 67 per cent to 5,754 units from 3,634 units. However, the fresh supply in Hyderabad is estimated to fall 36 per cent to 11,603 units from 18,232 units. In Kolkata, new supply is likely to fall 26 per cent to 3,411 units from 4,617 units. Housing supply in Mumbai is estimated to dip 6 per cent to 9,918 units from 10,502 units. Navi Mumbai is likely to witness a 5 per cent decline in new supply of homes to 6,937 units from 7,272 units. New launches in Pune are seen falling 47 per cent to 15,568 units from 29,261

units. In Thane too, the new supply of residential properties is estimated to fall 10 per cent to 18,726 units in April-June from 20,781 units in the year-ago period. PropEquity has estimated a marginal 2 per cent dip in housing sales during April-June 2024 to 1,19,901 units from 1,21,856 units in the corresponding period of the preceding year. PropEquity is a real estate data and analytics company. It tracks over 1,73,000 projects of about 57,500 developers across 44 cities in India on a real-time basis.

BoB aims to double tech team headcount to 3,000 by FY26-end

PTI ■ MUMBAI

State-owned Bank of Baroda is aiming to double its in-house technology team headcount to 3,000 in the next two years, a top official has said. The new additions to the current team strength of 1,500 employees will be done both through the regular hiring processes and lateral hires of specialist talent, Debadatta Chand, its managing director and chief executive officer told PTI recently. "In the next two years, we will double the number of people in our IT team," Chand said after the announcement of its March quarter earnings. Recently, the Reserve Bank of



India has taken stringent action on banks for shortfalls in technology architecture which impacted the ability to execute transactions. Apart from the 1,500 in-house workers, there are also contractual employees engaged by the bank in the IT function, Chand said. The bank is wanting to hire contemporary talent as part of the efforts to significantly up

its strength of IT professionals, he said. The lateral talent will be across any grade, depending on the requirement and a candidate's experience, he said. He also said that a generative artificial intelligence-based platform will soon be going live for customers wherein a slew of services could be availed in an interactive way.

Chand said that the bank has been spending aggressively on the technology front, including around Rs 2,000 crore investments on infrastructure alone, and will up the spends as the area comes under increased focus going ahead. In FY24, the bank had a budget of Rs 743 crore on technology and the IT spend stood at Rs 453 crore, as per management commentary. The bank is targeting to open 60 new branches during the fiscal year 2024-25. In FY25, the bank will be targeting a credit growth of 12-14 per cent, backing it up with a deposit growth of 10-12 per cent and aspires to keep the NIMs at 3.15 per cent, Chand said.

Haveus Aerotech plans robust expansion in major cities after record profit for FY24

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) services provider Haveus Aerotech India plans to open new facilities in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai in the coming months as part of its expansion plans, a top company official has said. The company also looks to hire 350 persons to increase its headcount to around 500 employees from around 150 workers, at present, in the coming years. The New Delhi-based MRO player recently announced the appointment of veteran aviation expert and former Air India Engineering Services chief HR Jagannath on its board as director. Haveus Aerotech plans a major expansion of its capabilities and facilities in different parts of India, its MD and CEO Anshul Bhargava told PTI. "Some of the new upcoming facilities to be established are in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai in a few months. "We will increase our workforce to around 500 employees in coming years with the expansion of our facilities," Bhargava said. The New Delhi-based company has recorded a nearly three-fold jump in net profit to Rs 15.69 crore in 2023-24 compared to Rs 5.68 crore in the year-ago period. Its revenue increased to Rs 45.22 crore in FY2023-24. Also, the company saw its ROI increase to 61 per cent during the same period. The MRO services provider said it is seeing a surge in the customer base while discussions with various new customers are at the final stages. Haveus Aerotech CFO Rajendra Kumar Singh said, "The company has shown remarkable growth during the last couple of years, and we are committed to following the trend in future also".

Students who shone in JEE Advanced felicitated



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

FIITJEE on Sunday felicitated their meritorious students who had performed exceptionally well in the recently declared JEE Advanced 2024 results. FIITJEEians performed exceptionally well in JEE Advanced with 4 of their students in the Top 10 AIR (All India Ranks). In a glittering event "UTKARSH", FIITJEE South Delhi centre conducted a felicitation ceremony in which the students, faculty along parents were present at Siri Fort Auditorium, New Delhi.

Taxpayers can amend sales return form before GST payment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST taxpayers will now have the option to amend outward supply or sales return form GSTR-1 before payment of taxes for a month or quarter. The GST Council in its meeting on Saturday had recommended providing a new optional facility by way of Form GSTR-1A to facilitate taxpayers to amend the details in Form GSTR-1 for a tax period and/or to declare additional details. GSTR-1A will, however, have to be filed before filing of return in GSTR-3B for the said tax period. This will facilitate the taxpayer to add any particulars of supply of the current tax period missed out in reporting in form GSTR-1 of the said tax period or to amend any particulars already declared in GSTR-1 of the current tax period (including those declared in IFF, for the first and second months of a quarter, if any, for quarterly taxpayers), to ensure that



correct liability is auto-populated in GSTR-3B. Currently, GST taxpayers file outward supply return GSTR-1 by the 11th day of the subsequent month. Taxpayers with an annual turnover of up to Rs 5 crore can file GSTR-1 quarterly within the 13th day of the end of the quarter. Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co Partner Rajat Bose said this is a positive change recommended by the council from a compliance perspective and will facilitate ease of doing business. Abhishek Jain, Indirect Tax Head & Partner, KPMG, said allowing revision of filings

made in GSTR-1 is a good move to rectify clerical and inadvertent errors before the payment of taxes and curtailing unwarranted notices for reconciliation of disclosures in GSTR-1 and payment of taxes vide GSTR-3B. "It'll be interesting to see the mechanism for a population of GSTR-2B for the recipient and the time gap available to the recipient for reconciling credits," Jain added. BDO India Indirect Tax Partner Maulik Manakiwala said the introduction of Form GSTR-1A to report particulars which were missed during the submission of GSTR 1 indicates that through proactive consultation with industry, the government's intention is to simplify GST law and ease compliances for the assessee. The GST Council also recommended that taxpayers having aggregate annual turnover up to Rs two crore are exempt from filing annual returns in form GSTR-9/9A for the FY 2023-24.



During his visit to the Cottage (Janpath) External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar praised the delightful array of artisanal products. Managing Director of The Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India Ltd Manoj Lal showcased the impressive offerings. PNS Photo

Boosting e-commerce exports with dedicated hubs

PTI ■ KOLKATA

In a bid to boost India's e-commerce exports, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is working with the Department of Revenue to establish designated e-commerce hubs across the country to streamline the process for online export shipments. The country's e-commerce exports currently stand at USD 2 billion as compared to China's staggering USD 350

billion, according to industry sources. The government aims at bridging the gap by establishing a supportive e-commerce ecosystem, they said. "A lot of streamlining is required in this regard. We are working with the Department of Revenue to have designated e-commerce hubs so that clearance of goods happens fast," Director General of Foreign Trade Santosh Kumar Sarangi told PTI. He said these hubs will have

facilities like dedicated customs and security checks, allowing cleared parcels to proceed through a green channel at airports, eliminating the need for further inspections. This approach mirrors best practices observed in other countries, Sarangi said. He also pointed out that the e-commerce hubs will be built and maintained by private entities, while the government will oversee security and customs clearances.

YOGA

THE WAY OF LIFE

RESEARCH FROM GLOBAL AND INDIAN STUDIES INDICATES THAT YOGA IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE HOLISTIC METHOD FOR REDUCING STRESS AND ENHANCING PHYSICAL WELL-BEING IN TODAY'S DEMANDING ENVIRONMENT.

ARCHANA JYOTI UNDERSCORES THE SUBSTANTIAL POSITIVE IMPACT OF YOGA

YOGA FOR HEART HEALTH

Presented at Heart Failure 2024, a study conducted by Dr. Ajit Singh from the Indian Council of Medical Research focused on yoga's effects on heart failure patients. The research involved 85 patients with heart failure, aged 30 to 70 years, who were divided into a yoga group (40 patients) and a control group (45 patients). All participants continued their standard heart failure medications. Participants in the yoga group received supervised sessions focusing on pranayama (yogic breathwork), meditation, and relaxation techniques. They continued home practice weekly, under guidance, for 50 minutes. Echocardiography measured heart structure and function at baseline, six months, and one year. Parameters included left

ventricular ejection fraction, right ventricular function, blood pressure, heart rate, and symptom burden. The yoga group demonstrated significant improvements in all measured parameters compared to the control group. This included better heart function, reduced symptoms, and improved daily activity capability. Dr. Singh concluded that yoga can complement standard medical treatments for heart failure, providing long-term benefits in managing symptoms and improving quality of life.

YOGA NIDRA FOR SLEEP AND COGNITIVE HEALTH

Published in PLOS ONE, the study led by Karuna Datta examined the effects of yoga nidra on sleep quality and cognitive function. Participants engaged in

a two-week yoga nidra program involving daily 20-minute guided sessions. Objective measures like polysomnography were used to assess sleep stages and cognitive performance. Participants showed increased delta-wave activity during deep sleep, indicating enhanced restorative sleep. They also demonstrated improved cognitive abilities across various tests, including memory, learning, and emotional recognition. Yoga nidra was highlighted as a cost-effective and accessible method to improve sleep and cognitive function, offering potential benefits for mental and physical health enhancement. Yet another groundbreaking functional MRI (fMRI) study by researchers from IIT Delhi, AIIMS Delhi, and Mahajan

Imaging Delhi conducted on Yoga Nidra, revealed significant changes in brain connectivity during the practice. Published in Scientific Reports, the study involved 30 experienced meditators and 31 novices. It found that Yoga Nidra alters the Default Mode Network (DMN), reducing connectivity more in experienced meditators. Thus suggesting reduced mind-wandering and deeper relaxation with heightened awareness. This study sheds light on how Yoga Nidra impacts brain function and could potentially aid in mental health therapies.

YOGA FOR CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN RELIEF

Published in the Journal of Orthopaedic Research, this study focused on the efficacy of yoga in alleviating chronic low back pain.

The research involved 21 women, with 10 experiencing chronic low back pain. Participants underwent an 8-session yoga program over four weeks, combining physical postures, breathing exercises, and mindfulness practices. Women with chronic low back pain reported significant reductions in pain intensity, measured using a visual analog scale. They also showed improved neuromuscular responses during trunk flexion, crucial for managing back pain. The study suggested that yoga could be a valuable complementary therapy for chronic low back pain, providing holistic benefits beyond conventional treatments.

YOGA'S ROLE IN MANAGING EPILEPSY STIGMA AND SEIZURE CONTROL

The study, published in


Neurology, explored yoga's impact on reducing stigma and improving seizure control in people with epilepsy. Participants practiced yoga or sham yoga for three months, focusing on relaxation techniques and meditation to induce a relaxation response. Yoga participants reported reduced stigma perception, decreased seizure frequency, and improved quality of life compared to the sham group. They also exhibited lower anxiety levels and enhanced mindfulness. The study underscored yoga's potential as a holistic therapy for epilepsy management, complementing conventional medications and improving overall well-being.

KUNDALINI YOGA AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RISK


Conducted by UCLA researchers and published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, the study examined Kundalini yoga's effects on brain connectivity in older women at risk for Alzheimer's disease. Using specialized MRI techniques, the study suggested that Kundalini yoga enhanced hippocampal connectivity related to stress management and memory processing. The findings highlighted yoga as a promising strategy for enhancing cognitive health in individuals with perceived stress and cardiovascular risk factors. Needless to say, each study underscores yoga's versatility as a therapeutic practice, benefiting diverse health conditions from heart failure and chronic pain to epilepsy and cognitive decline.




SAIMA WAZED (WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia): Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice originating in India. The Sanskrit word 'yoga' means 'to unite,' symbolizing the harmony between body and consciousness. Mindful breathing, meditation, and gentle movement calm the nervous system, reduce stress hormones, and cultivate inner peace.




RAJESH KOTECHEA (Union Ayush Secretary) Yoga is a comprehensive instrument for empowering women, encompassing their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. Empowered women take on roles as leaders, educators, and advocates for change, promoting inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment across society. Our aim is to propel Yoga into a widespread movement with a focus on women's well-being and promoting global health and peace.




DR. ISHWAR V. BASAVARADDI, (Ex-Director, Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga): Yoga fosters unity between mind and body, and promotes balance, self-control, and overall well-being. Various studies have shown that yoga works almost all our muscles and keeps the body flexible and supple, yoga improves symptoms of generalised anxiety disorder, suggesting that the practice may be useful for people dealing with anxiety. meditation and breathing.




RAJ VARDHAN DIXIT, (Noida International Institute of Medical Sciences (NIIMS) College & Hospital, NIU): Yoga, with its holistic approach to wellness, has emerged as a powerful tool for addressing both physical and mental health issues. Incorporating daily yoga sessions into one's routine not only enhances flexibility, strength, and balance but also offers therapeutic benefits for conditions like back pain and arthritis.



DR RP PRASHAR (CMO, Ayurveda, MCD) Yoga and Ayurveda are the most ancient disciplines of India which aim to achieve physical, mental and spiritual balance. The various branches of yoga include Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Gyan Yoga. Of these, Hatha Yoga focuses on physical asanas and pranayama, which is extremely effective in the treatment of lifestyle diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure.



DR VINOOD KUMAR (Yoga expert and Naturo-therapist): Yoga, an ancient tradition rooted in the Vedic era, has gained worldwide acknowledgment and reverence over the last twenty-five years because of its inclusiveness and benefits. It serves as a method that guides the mind, body, and soul to function harmoniously and artistically. It transcends individual limitations.




Celebrating Diversity and Awareness

Vitiligo Day observed on June 25 each year raises awareness about the skin condition causing loss of skin pigment. It's a day to celebrate diversity, promote understanding, and support those affected by vitiligo worldwide, says **ARCHANA JYOTI**



RADIANCE BEYOND SKIN: CELEBRATING BEAUTY FROM WITHIN


Stepping onto the beauty ramp with patches of vitiligo wasn't just about showcasing outer beauty; it was a bold statement of self-acceptance and empowerment. "For years, society's narrow beauty standards made us doubt if we belonged. In a world where narrow beauty standards often exclude diversity, stepping into the spotlight that day was a moment of triumph," these were the sentiments of every vitiligo warrior who participated in a fashion show 'Vitiligo Vikings 3.0' spearheaded by **Dr. Nitika Kohil**, an ayurvedic dermatologist.



The event held recently in Delhi aimed to empower individuals affected by the skin condition which is often mired with stigma and misconceptions. The event featured a transformative fashion show and talent competition, where participants confidently showcased their unique beauty through ramp walks. Dr. Kohli, Managing Director of Aamil Healthcare and Research Center, emphasized that the event aimed to redefine beauty standards and highlight that beauty transcends skin color. The event also included an exciting lucky draw offering one year of free treatment from Aamil Healthcare. Dr. Kohli informed that Aamil Healthcare & Research Center has successfully treated over 2 lakh patients across 34 cities in India and continues to extend its services globally.

SUMMER HEAT AND VITILIGO


Individuals living with vitiligo are particularly vulnerable to the effects of heightened temperatures and increased sun exposure. **Dr. Atula Gupta** a Medical and Cosmetic Dermatologist emphasizes. She offers practical tips to help manage and cope with these challenges effectively. As per Gupta, sun Protection is of paramount importance for individuals with vitiligo. A broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher should be applied copiously on all exposed areas including those with white patches. Reapplication every 4 hours is crucial. Clothing should cover as much skin as possible and physical protection in the form of



umbrellas, sunglasses, and hats should be encouraged. During peak sun hours, it is advisable to seek shade whenever possible. Avoid consumption of alcohol or excessive caffeine and drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. It is crucial to moisturize the white patches on the skin to avoid the risk of irritation from sweat and trauma. Taking care of your mental and emotional well-being is essential for managing vitiligo. No doubt, from increased psychological stress to the risk of sunburn, peak summer weather poses specific concerns for people with vitiligo. But with proactive measures like emphasising on sun protection, protective skin care, fostering emotional well-being and addressing mental health issues people with vitiligo can enjoy the summer months without impacting their skin condition, says Dr Atula.

WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT

Vitiligo is an autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks melanocytes, cells responsible for producing pigment in the skin, leading to lighter patches and spots. It can affect various parts of the body, including the skin, mouth, nose, and eyes, and may cause premature graying of hair or white streaks in hair. While vitiligo can appear at any age and in people of all races, it often begins in childhood and may run in families. However, in many cases it is not guaranteed to be inherited. Triggers like severe sunburns or skin injuries can also contribute to its development. Additionally, vitiligo may coincide with other autoimmune conditions or certain cancers.



NEWS BRIEFS



AI-ENABLED YOGA MAT DEVELOPED

A startup incubated at IIT Mandi has developed an artificial intelligence (AI) -enabled Yoga mat, which was presented to Union Ministers here. The mat called 'YogiFy' was handed over to Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar; Union Railways, I&B and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw; Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and others on behalf of the Ministry of Science and Technology. The mat has the potential to revolutionise the at-home yoga experience by leveraging AI and Computer Vision (CV) technologies to enable comfortable yoga practice, according to the ministry. It is equipped with a built-in innovative sensor layer, tracks the postures of yoga performers, and offers suggestions to help correct their posture in real-time. It has been developed by Wellnesys Technologies Private Ltd, incubated at the Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) iHub at IIT Mandi, and supported under the NM-ICPS programme of DST.

NEW SAFETY MEASURES FOR TOPIRAMATE

The UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has implemented new safety measures for topiramate (sold under the brand name

Topamax) following a comprehensive safety review triggered by recent European studies. These studies highlighted increased risks associated with the use of topiramate during pregnancy, including a 2 to 3 times higher likelihood of intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children born to mothers who used the drug during pregnancy. Based on recommendations from the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM), the MHRA now advises that topiramate should not be prescribed for treating epilepsy during pregnancy unless there are no suitable alternative treatments available. This caution extends previous guidance that already restricted its use during pregnancy for migraine due to known risks of birth defects.

PHDCCI HEALTH TEAM MEETS FM

PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) delegation led by Dr. Deep Goel, Chair of the Health Committee, of the chamber recently met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and shared their Pre-Budget Memorandum for Union Budget 2024-25. The bucket list includes efforts to strengthen our healthcare system amidst the pandemic's lessons, enhancing public health infrastructure, and investing in medical education is critical. Addressing regional healthcare disparities and bolstering the workforce, including doctors, nurses, technicians, and pharmacists, is essential for effective pandemic response. Redirecting resources to expand facilities, incentivizing healthcare professionals, and implementing robust public health emergency plans are vital. Leveraging technology, promoting preventive care, and fostering international collaboration are key for resilient health infrastructure. Establishing well-equipped primary healthcare centers and government hospitals nationwide, particularly at Tehsil/Block levels, is crucial, it said.

Near-perfect India could play party poopers to under-pressure Australia

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (SAINT LUCIA)

India will be out to derail Australia's T20 World Cup campaign when they take on their shocked and under-pressure opponents in their final Super 8 game here on Monday.

A third straight win for India will not only make them the group toppers and send them to the semifinals, it will also substantially threaten Australia's chances of progressing through to the semi-finals following the unexpected loss to Afghanistan in Saint Vincent on Saturday night.

Following the reverse against Afghanistan, Australia don't have the destiny in their own hands and will be keenly tracking Rashid Khan's team final game against Bangladesh on Monday night.

India, who have had to endure heartbreaking defeats at the

hands of Australia in major ICC events, would like to see a pre-mature exit of their strong rivals.

On fine-tuning their game ahead of the knockouts, India don't need to do much having ticked all boxes in their back-to-back wins against Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

Both Rohit and Virat Kohli played innings of substance against Afghanistan, while Shivam Dube, who had not been able to perform his role, answered his critics with a crucial knock.

Number three Rishabh Pant has been getting dismissed off reverse hit often and it is something he would like to correct.

The biggest positive for India in this tournament has been the all-round effort of Hardik Pandya, who has now come to the party with the bat to complement his incisive spells.

Kuldeep Yadav has taken little

time to come up with match-winning contributions and he would be relied on for wickets in the middle overs.

With the team playing three Super 8 games with as many days of travel in between, the management will be tempted to rotate players but is unlikely to do so.

India, who arrived in Saint Lucia on Saturday night, chose not to train ahead of the Australia game considering the hectic travel involved.

It will only be the second day game at the Darren Sammy Cricket Stadium. The day nighters have produced high-scores here but in the previous game at the venue, England were not able to chase 164 in a day game against South Africa.

It has been the best batting strip of the competition but sun beating down on the pitch through the day is likely to aid the slower bowlers.

Australia, on the other hand,



have plenty to worry about going into the game. It was a flop batting show against Afghanistan and unusually Mitchell Marsh's team had a forgettable night in the field as well.

Having logged only 88 runs in six games at a strike rate of 111, Marsh needs to lead from the front against India.

With the ball, offie Glenn Maxwell needs to check his economy rate of 8.58 runs per over.

In terms of match ups, it will be interesting to see how Kohli fares against leg-spinner Adam Zampa, who has had the better of the Indian superstar on multiple occasions.

Australia played the extra spinner in Ashton Agar instead of Mitchell Starc against Afghanistan but that could change against India.

"It was an off-night for us in the field, and we own that. We'll be back next game. It

wasn't an easy wicket but both teams played on this surface. (India next...) First and foremost it becomes clear for us. We need to win and no better team to do it against (India)," said the skipper in a very matter of fact way after the Afghanistan game.

SQUADS:

India: Rohit Sharma (captain), Hardik Pandya, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Siraj.

Australia: David Warner, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh (captain), Glenn Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis, Tim David, Matthew Wade (wk), Pat Cummins, Ashton Agar, Adam Zampa, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc, Josh Inglis, Cameron Green, Nathan Ellis.



Big hitting West Indies clash with rampaging SA in must-win super 8 clash

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND

Hosts West Indies will need their all-round firepower for taming a rampaging South Africa in their must-win final Super Eight clash to seal the semi-final berth at the T20 World Cup here.

After their only loss in six games to England in their opening Super 8 game, WI regrouped to smash co-hosts USA by nine wickets.

For WI, a win will see them through to the last-four, while a loss will bring it down to net run-rate and that too only if USA beat England in the other group match.

South Africa, who have won all their six games so far, are sitting at the top of the table but they too are not yet guaranteed a spot in the semifinal and will need a win to seal the position.

A loss will again leave their fate on the other result and NRR.

However, both teams will have the advantage of knowing the exact scenario before they head into the match.

West Indies had failed to rotate strike against England but they quickly addressed the issue, producing a dominant show against USA led by Shai Hope's belligerent 39-ball 82.

While Hope will be expected to produce the firework in the powerplay, the Windies also possess some big power-hitters such as Nicholas Pooran, Andre Russell to provide the charge in the death as well. They also have Kyle Mayers waiting in the wings and it needs to be seen if WI is tempted to open with him, given his stint in SA20 and his mountain of runs in the pre-World Cup series against South Africa last month.

"I think most of the times when we control the power play, whether batting or bowling, that's when we come out on top," Roston Chase said in the pre-match press conference.

"I think that's the main focus, because we know in the end we have the power at the end. So, it's just for us to control that power play with the batting and our bowling..."

South Africa, on the other hand, haven't looked dominant so far despite an all-win

record. It has always been tight wins even against minnows like the US and Nepal.

The positive thing is that Aiden Markram's team has always found a way to come out trumps.

"If you look at previous World Cups, the small moments we haven't really won. And it's good to see that I think all the games have come really close and we found a way, so it's building the character within the team," Keshav Maharaj said.

"And I think it prepares us for obviously certain opportunities that we could get and crossing over the line in those small moments are things that we've never done before. So, it's good to see us getting into that."

For SA, Quinton de Kock and Reeza Hendricks have done the heavy lifting, while Anrich Nortje and Keshav Maharaj have been their standout bowler.

De Kock's big-hitting in the powerplay made the difference in their last match against England and WI has to find a way to stop him.

WI has some quality spinners in Akeal Hosein, Gudakesh Motie and Chase and a lot will depend on them as how they contain the middle-order, led by David Miller.

WI will also take inspiration from their 3-0 sweep of South Africa ahead of the tournament although it came against a second-string side. South Africa, on the other hand, have an overwhelming 3-1 record against the West Indies in T20 World Cups.

SQUAD:

West Indies Squad: Rovman Powell (c), Kyle Mayers, Johnson Charles, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Sherfane Rutherford, Andre Russell, Romario Shepherd, Roston Chase, Akeal Hosein, Alzarri Joseph, Gudakesh Motie, Obed McCoy, Shamar Joseph, Shimron Hetmyer and Shai Hope.

South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Otttniel Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Bjorn Fortuin, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi and Tristan Stubbs.

Afghanistan shock Australia by 21 runs in Super 8s match of T20 World Cup

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN

Afghanistan pulled off an upset of epic proportions with a shock 21-run win over mighty Australia in T20 World Cup with Gulbadin Naib's four-wicket haul upending Pat Cummins' hat-trick to produce one of most memorable days in Afghan cricket.

Using the slower balls smartly on a difficult batting wicket, Afghanistan defended their total of 148 for six for their first-ever win over Australia in international cricket.

Australia were all out for 127 in 19.2 overs in the Super Eight contest and they are now staring at early elimination from the World Cup.

Australia now must win their match against India on Monday and also hope that Afghanistan lose to Bangladesh in their next match.

Afghanistan opens Rahmanullah Gurbaz (60) and Ibrahim Zadran (51) forged a 118-run partnership setting up base for a challenging total but Pat Cummins registered his second successive hat-trick spread across two overs to restrict Afghanistan to a manageable total.

Australia were reduced to 32 for 3

in the powerplay but Glenn Maxwell slammed a 41-ball 59 to somewhat resurrect the chase.

However Naib's timely strikes proved crucial in toppling the 2021 champions.

Afghanistan exacted revenge for their defeat in Mumbai during the ODI World Cup. Maxwell had snatched victory from Aghans at that time and on Saturday too he threatened to deny them but Naib's brilliance ensured them the win.

"It's massive win for us as a team and as a nation. Great feeling. It's something we missed in last two years. Really happy with the win and super proud of the guys," Afghanistan skipper Rashid Khan said at the post-match presentation.

"The way Gulbadin bowled today - the experience he has, it came good today. The way Nabi started - the wicket of Warner - was also pleasing to see. It's so important for us back home and around the world. I'm sure they're proud and would've enjoyed the game," he added.

The result has opened up the Group 1 as both Australia and Afghanistan now have one win each with one match to go, while India sit atop the table with two



wins from as many games.

Defending 149 on a spin-friendly wicket, Afghanistan had the perfect start as Naveen-ul-Haq picked up two early wickets with the new ball to peg Australia back.

First Naveen cleaned up Travis Head for a duck with a fuller delivery and then he deceived the skipper Mitch Marsh with a slower delivery as he holed out to Nabi.

Maxwell eased the pressure with two fours off Azmatullah but Nabi removed David Warner (3), who went for a slog sweep only to find Noor Ahmad as Australia scored the lowest Powerplay score of 33 for 3 this World Cup.

Maxwell, who had tormented Afghanistan during the ODI World Cup last year, continued to find the boundaries as he clattered spinner Nangeyalia Kharote for a four and a six.

Naib then struck twice to give Afghanistan hope as he surprised Marcus Stoinis with a bouncer. The batter top-edged it to find Gurbaz. He next trapped Tim David as Australia slipped to 85 for 5 in the 13th over.

Maxwell slammed a six off Rashid Khan and Naib in 12th and 13th overs to keep Australia's chase on track.

Naib returned to pick his most

prized cap, dismissing the dangerous Maxwell in the 15th over and then Rashid removed Matthew Wade as their chase fell apart.

Naib next knocked off the stumps of Cummins, while Naveen claimed his third victim by removing Ashton Agar.

Azmatullah ended the proceedings by dismissing Josh Hazlewood.

Earlier, Gurbaz and Ibrahim notched up their third century stand of this T20 World Cup with a 118-run partnership.

The duo capitalised on their chances as Australia had to wait till the 16th over for their first breakthrough.

Gurbaz slammed four maximums and as many fours in his 49-ball stay, while Zadran hit six boundaries during his 48-ball knock.

Stoinis got rid of Gurbaz with an off-cutter, while in the next over, Adam Zampa cleaned up Azmatullah Omarzai with a slider.

Looking for big hits, Afghanistan lost wickets there after with Cummins dismissing Rashid Khan, Karim Janat and Gulbadin Naib to become the first player to pick up two hat-tricks in T20 World Cups.

JORDAN, BUTTLER POWER ENGLAND PAST USA, INTO SEMIFINALS

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN

Pacer Chris Jordan grabbed a sensational hat-trick in his birthplace before captain Jos Buttler's blitzkrieg as England stormed into the semifinals of the T20 World Cup with a 10-wicket mauling of USA here on Sunday.

Making a comeback in place of Mark Wood, Jordan (4/10) mopped up the USA tail by claiming four wickets in five balls, including the hat-trick, in the 19th over as the Americans folded for 115 in 18.5 overs.

Buttler then blazed away to a 38-ball 83 not out as England completed the chase in 9.4 overs to become the first team to make the semifinals of the showpiece.

During his scintillating knock, Buttler smashed seven sixes and six fours, including hitting five maximums in a Harmeet Singh over to leave the USA bowling bruised and battered.

Earlier, the 35-year-old Jordan, who was born and grew up in Christ Church, Barbados, began the penultimate over dismissing a well-

set Corey Anderson for 29 with a low full toss.

After surviving the next ball, Ali Khan found his off stump knocked over before Jordan went on to dismiss Nosthush Kenjige and Saurabh Netravalkar off successive deliveries to pick the first hat-trick for England in T20Is.

Jordan had figures of 4/10 from his 2.5 overs.

Jordan also became only the second bowler in T20 World Cup history to pick four wickets in a single over.

Curtis Campher of Ireland was the first to pick four wickets in a single over against the Netherlands during the 2021 edition in Abu Dhabi.

It was Sam Curran (2/13) who triggered the collapse by dismissing Harmeet Singh (21; 17b) in the final delivery of the previous over as USA suffered a stunning collapse, losing five wickets in six balls for no run.

Earlier, Adil Rashid took a miserly 2/13 in four overs.

Andries Gous flicked Reece Topley towards fine leg for a six but two balls later, hit the ball straight to Phil Salt at deep square leg while attempting a similar shot.

USA faced some nervous moments in the day's second over as Steven Taylor survived a run out after giving up hope of returning back to the crease in time. It would have been over for him if Liam Livingstone's throw had hit the stumps. At the other end, Nitish Kumar top-edged a fast delivery from Jofra Archer that flew over deep third man for a maximum.

Nitish played a lovely shot over mid on for a boundary off Topley and in the next ball, the Canadian-born 30-year-old produced a clean hit over long-on for a six.

Curran was brought in as first change and he delivered in his first over, cutting short Taylor's stay in the middle thanks to an excellent catch by Moeen Ali at backward point. Taylor's dismissal marked Curran's 50th wicket in T20 Internationals.

Skipper Aaron Jones quickly got off the mark by steering one through the third man region for a four as USA ended powerplay at 48 for two.

Buttler handed the ball to Rashid, who has been having a pretty good tournament, and the leg-spinner

began his spell by conceding only two runs.

Rashid did what was expected of him in his second over, bowling out Jones with a beautiful googly to deny the USA captain a chance to face Archer, his childhood friend and school-mate.

The two grew up together in Barbados, dreaming of playing international cricket for West Indies before going on to represent their adopted countries.

Having dried up the boundaries, England tasted success again when Rashid employed his effective googly to cut short Nitish's promising stay.

Nitish struck two sixes and a four. Livingstone had Milind Kumar caught behind as USA slipped to 88 for five at the end of the 14th over.

The 100 came up in the 17th over as Corey Anderson and Harmeet Singh tried to prop up the USA innings.

USA had a productive 18th over as they got 14 runs off Curran after a six a four by Harmeet, who was however dismissed in the last ball that brought their downfall.

Indian recurve mixed team wins bronze medal in Archery World Cup

PTI ■ ANTALYA (TURKEY)

Indian recurve mixed team of Dhiraj Bommadevara and Bhajan Kaur produced an excellent performance to rally past Mexico and clinch a bronze medal in the Archery World Cup Stage 3 here on Sunday.

Trailing 0-2 after conceding the opening set, the Indian team produced a flawless round to bring it level and seal a stunning 5-3 (35-38, 40-39, 38-37, 38-38) win over their Mexican opponents Alejandra Valencia and Matias Grande.

This was India's third medal from the meet and the archers will be in the hunt for two more medals when Dhiraj and Ankita Bhakat compete in their respective individual semifinals later in the day.

Indian women's compound team of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur bagged a gold medal, while Priyansh bagged a silver on Saturday.

Italy and Croatia clash with tournament survival at stake

AP ■ LEIPZIG (GERMANY)

Defending champion Italy needs to avoid defeat against neighboring Croatia in their final group game to ensure progress at the European Championship.

Croatia can progress with a win, or by avoiding defeat as long as Albania does not beat group-winner Spain in the other Group B game at the same time.

HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE MATCH:

MATCH FACTS

□ Italy has three points after

beating Albania 2-1 in its opening game before losing 1-0 to Spain, which is already assured of winning the group.

Croatia lost to Spain 3-0 in its opening game, then drew with Albania 2-2 in their second game, leaving both Croatia and Albania with one point.

Albania has the better goal difference.

□ Though a draw will be enough for Italy's progression, Luciano Spalletti's team will be keen to impress after being thoroughly outclassed by Spain in its previous game.

Italy only lost by a goal, but the

Italian players spent most of the game chasing Spanish shadows and were saved embarrassment by captain and goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

□ Zlatko Dalic's Croatia team is once again led by Real Madrid star Luka Modric, who is yet to score in his fifth tournament appearance.

□ Italy lost in its previous and only game in Leipzig, a 1-0 defeat to East Germany in a friendly in April 1982.

□ Many of the Croatian players have played in Italy, while Italy coach Luciano



Spalletti is familiar with Marcelo Brozovic and Ivan Perisic from their time together at Inter Milan between 2017 and 2019.

The now 35-year-old Perisic scored 55 goals in 254 games across stints with Inter, winning the Serie A title in 2021 and Coppa Italia the next season.

TEAM NEWS

□ Italy left-back Federico Dimarco is expected to miss the game with a right calf injury sustained in the loss against Spain.

Dimarco featured in both of Italy's games so far.

□ Croatia will be without midfielder Nikola Vlacic, who is no longer with the squad because of an injury, while veteran defender Domagoj Vida missed Saturday's training session with an ankle injury.

BY THE NUMBERS

□ Italy has a poor record against Croatia, winning only one of their previous nine meetings.

Croatia won three, while there were five draws.

The last three games all finished 1-1.

□ Italy's only win came in the first meeting between the

countries, a friendly in Genoa in 1942 that yielded four goals for the home team.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

"I know the Italy coach. They will be well organized. It will be a tough match, but I believe we will rise to the challenge and come out victorious." - Croatia midfielder Mario Pasalic.

"Croatia are strong. They have experience. In addition to Brozovic, they have many quality players and we will have to be careful. But we will have to play our game with our own strengths, and I'm sure we will cause them problems."

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